The Evolving Eye: Notions of Alterity in Twentieth Century Travel Writing

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

University of Tasmania
June, 1995

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree or graduate diploma in any tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis or in the footnotes.

Abstract

The changing role of the observer in twentieth century travel writing is discussed with reference to eight authors who, I argue, are of seminal importance in this field. Freya Stark's travel writing of the 1930s is anachronistic in several ways, and very representative of a late nineteenth century mode imbued with imperialistic values characteristic of earlier exploration writing. The other authors discussed are strongly affected by the fact that in addition to their travel writing, they are fiction writers. They see themselves as artists committed to expressing certain truths about human experience by a combination of acute observation with special uses of language. They move towards experiential and subjective narrative techniques which reflect the advent of modernism and postmodernism. I argue that their changing perceptions combine in various ways with new theories of the place of language in human culture, to produce a rapid evolution of the travel narrative over five decades. The result is that the travel narratives discussed here reveal intimate links with developments in fiction, literary theory, the culture of travel and society at large.

Writing at a similar time to Freya Stark, Vita Sackville-West more nearly represents the modernist trend of her contemporaries, but like Stark's *The Valleys of the Assassins* (1936), Sackville-West's *Passenger To Teheran* (1926) reveals a tendency towards appropriation and an unconscious discourse of empire. In contrast to Stark and Sackville-West, D.H. Lawrence and Lawrence Durrell sought to realise personal utopias in their travels. Lawrence's *Sea and Sardinia* (1921) and Durrell's *Bitter Lemons* (1945) make far more subjective and experiential observations than the previous two texts, an approach consistent with modernist trends which reject a realist and omniscient narrative method. Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* (1979) and Robyn Davidson's *Tracks* (1980) emphasise this change in the perspective of the observer and develop in different directions the subjective style with its emphasis on sensory experience; their texts are deeply personal and confessional in tone. In this, both are influenced by the environmentalism and the seeking of spiritual alternatives prevalent in the 1970s. The increasingly confessional nature of travel writing since the 1920s makes it necessary to assess boundaries between travel narratives and autobiography. Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* (1977) and Peter Conrad's *Down Home* (1988) are both extra-ordinary examples of the travel genre.

Their intertextuality reveals their conscious relationship with fictions. These authors draw heavily on the use of metaphor, seeing their destinations as metaphorical realms at the far ends of the earth rather than literal places. Chatwin in particular appears to be influenced by post-colonial and postmodern theories.

At various points I draw on feminist theory which has shown up the gendered aspects of travel writing. My argument contends finally that the role of the observer in travel writing has been profoundly influenced by fictional modes, and by the critical discourses about that fiction since late modernism.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Jennifer Livett, for the guidance, enthusiasm and inspiration she provided during the course of this thesis. I would also like to thank Mr J. L. Winter for his encouragement at particular stages of this study, and Dr Ruth Blair for suggestions and advice.

I would also like to thank Noelene and Robert van Schie and Shelley O'Reilly for proof-reading, and Rolan Eberhard and Mungo Park for their constant support, assistance and schemes for travel.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

> 'Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map . . . I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there.'
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> (Marlowe) Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

There has always been travel, and since the advent of the written word, travel writing, but more recently there has been a new development, writing about travel writing. Only in the twentieth century has it been fully realised that while the journey is a metaphor for narrative, narrative is equally a metaphor for the journey. The structure of a story is very similar to that of a journey, right down to the signs on the way: 'The process of editing is one of selection, ordering and construction - in effect, of narration - composing a tale for the reader to travel through'[1]. Reading becomes a voyage into the minds of others - an enlarging of the self through encounter with the ideas of others rather than with the 'Other' itself. Recent theory has used the term 'travel' with its implicit notion of journey or voyage, to explore language and narrative. Georges Van Den Abeele examines the connections between 'critical thinking and the metaphor of the voyage in the context of French philosophical literature from the late Renaissance through the Enlightenment'[2]. Sunpreet Arshi, Carmen Kirstein, Riaz Naqvi and Falk Pankow claim, 'To examine travel is to examine theory', and suggest, 'Perhaps it was inevitable that the term [travel] would vie with 'culture' as a signifier of tremendous scope'[3] .

The notion of the journey has played an enormous role in the development of the western psyche. Van Den Abeele suggests,

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[1] George Robertson, Melinda Mash, Lisa Tickner, Jon Bird, Barry Curtis and Tim Putnam, 'As the world turns: introduction', *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of home and displacement* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 1.

[2] Georges Van Den Abeele, *Travel as Metaphor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. xiii.

[3] Sunpreet Arshi, Carmen Kirstein, Riaz Naqvi and Falk Pankow, 'Why travel? Tropics, en-tropics and apo-tropics', *Travellers' Tales*, p. 225.

> The dearest notions of the West nearly all appeal to the motif of the voyage: progress, the quest for knowledge, freedom as freedom to move, self-awareness as an Odyssean enterprise, salvation as a destination to be attained by following a prescribed pathway . . . [4]

and Wellek and Warren comment in *Theory of Literature*, 'One of the oldest and most universal plots is that of the Journey, by land or water'[5]. Twentieth century developments such as television, mass communication and tourism have made the world seem a smaller place, yet ironically, at the same time have added to the possibilities and potential for travel. Salman Rushdie claims, 'We all cross frontiers'[6]; in a sense we travel and make journeys every day.

My aim has been to explore some ways in which travel writers in the twentieth century have increasingly become aware that the word 'journey' both confirms and resists the writer's physical journey. Freya Stark, writing in the 1930s, seems to me to be herself a point of departure. Firm in the conviction that if the writer is honest and careful, then the word is true to the world, she still reveals in her work a last moment of confidence in nineteenth century forms of travel writing, together with hints of new paths for the genre.

There has been a surge of interest in travellers and travel writing in recent years: a plethora of material about nineteenth century spinster travellers has emerged, just as there has been an increase in material written about the psychology of travelling and the theory of travel writing. Notable late twentieth century travellers like Jonathan Raban and Colin Thubron have written articles for popular magazines on the reasons why they travel, and have attempted to analyse the appeal of travelling and the writing of it. Raban claims that 'travel is a kind of delinquency, more often rooted in the compulsion to escape the boredom and responsibilities of home than it is in any very serious desire to scale the Great Pyramid of Cheops or walk the length of the Great Wall of China'[7]. One has only to

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[4] Van Den Abeele, p. xv.
[5] Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949), p. 217.
[6] Salman Rushdie, introduction to *Günter Grass on Writing and Politics*, transl. Ralph Manheim (1985; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. xv.
[7] Jonathan Raban, 'Road to Utopia', *The Australian Magazine*, Oct 1994, p. 15.

consider the aforementioned Victorian spinster travellers to realise the truth of this.

In his exhaustive study, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*, Percy Adams is in agreement with Raban, quoting Freud's belief that 'if one motive for travelling is curiosity, a stronger motive is that which impels adolescent runaways', claiming:

> . . . a host of well-known travelers [sic], whether they wrote their own stories or were written about, left home and started their journeys to avoid unpleasantness, that is, to take flight from danger or from some kind of prison.[8]

Paul Fussell, in his excellent account of British travel writing between the two world wars, suggests a similar motive for travel:

> The impulse to flee will be the stronger when the father (or mother) is one who closes pubs, regulates sexual behaviour, devises the British Christmas . . . contrives that the sun shall never be seen, and finds nothing wrong with the class system and the greedy capitalism sustaining it. An insistent leitmotif of writing between the wars, for both successful and would-be escapees, is I Hate It Here.[9]

In *The Towers of Trebizond* (1956), Rose Macaulay makes a pertinent comment on this through the words of her fictional character and narrator, Laurie. When Laurie is asked if her aunt Dot, an enthusiastic traveller, loves her country, she replies:

> Not that I know of, particularly. Why should she? I mean, she usually prefers to be somewhere else, when she can. Most Britons do, I think. I expect it's the climate. Besides, we're a nomadic people; we like change of scene.[10]

Laurie's words are sweeping, but there seems to be a degree of historical fact in them. Certainly, her words fit many nineteenth and twentieth century English travellers from Lady Hester Stanhope and Isabella Bird Bishop, to D.H. Lawrence and Bruce Chatwin.

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[8] Percy G. Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), p. 152.
[9] Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travellers Between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 16.
[10] Rose Macaulay, *The Towers of Trebizond* (London: Collins and the Book Society, 1956), p. 105.

Raban also cites the quest in his explanation of the psychology of travel. 'Every journey is a quest of sorts', he says, 'though few travellers have more than a dim inkling of what it is they're questing for.' He goes on to suggest that this notion of quest is based on an inadequacy at the heart of things, claiming that it is a 'sense of incompleteness [that] gets us on the move'[11]. Throughout history, from ancient to the present times, both fictional and real travellers have been motivated by quests - for a utopia, for riches, for discovery, for mythical creatures, or as a testing of their own capabilities. Adams provides seven sub-categories of the quest that he sees as common to the novel and the *recit de voyage* (his term for travel narratives):

> quests involving religion, war, a golden or social utopia, exploration, monetary gain, a person, and knowledge of the world or oneself.[12]

Adams suggests that 'the spirit of discovery has always been a chief source of travel literature' - this can be seen to encompass both physical, objective discoveries as well as personal, subjective ones.

Raban discusses the nature of travel in another article, 'Never So Homely', suggesting that:

> To travel is not to be at home . . . it is deliberately to orientate oneself badly in one's environment and thereby to open oneself to the odd and the uncanny. The famous sharp eye of the traveller . . . is the result of a fundamental maladjustment between the traveller and the world he passes through.[13]

Ways of seeing - the perceptions a traveller has and the observations that are made - are undoubtedly fundamental to travel and particularly travel writing, and will be discussed at length later.

This thesis is a study of what I believe to be the most essential aspects of the evolution of travel writing in the twentieth century, focusing in particular on the changing role of the observer. It is an analysis of the ways in which authors have attempted to write about places other than those with which they are familiar, with or without appropriation. Specifically, it has to do with notions of alterity - examining the way difference is perceived and written about across the century by a variety of writers. Eight

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[11] Raban, p. 18.
[12] Adams, p 153.
[13] Jonathan Raban, 'Never So Homely', *Departures* Jan/Feb 1989, p. 3.

texts of particular relevance to changes in twentieth century travel writing are discussed in detail. These begin with Freya Stark's *The Valleys of the Assassins* (1936)[14] and Vita Sackville-West's *Passenger To Teheran* (1926)[15]. Then D.H. Lawrence's *Sea and Sardinia* (1921)[16] is considered in relation to Lawrence Durrell's *Prospero's Cell* (1945)[17]. Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* (1979)[18] and Robyn Davidson's *Tracks* (1980)[19] form the matter of chapter three. Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* (1977)[20] and Peter Conrad's *Down Home* (1988)[21] make a curious final pair which illuminates two possible extremes of travel writing.

All seven texts discussed after Freya Stark's *The Valleys of the Assassins* are very different kinds of travel narratives from those of previous centuries - not only because of changing styles, but because of focus, emphasis and selectivity, but they share at least one element common to both the activity and the literature of travel. In any travel narrative, along with an emphasis on orientation and perspective, the focus is the journey or voyage, 'for the journey motif - real or fictional - is still the most significant'[22]. The focus of travel narratives, both fictional and factual, is not just the destination, but the *process* of getting there.

Raban acknowledges the importance of movement, saying, ' . . . travel is perceived as a state of being - continuous escape, perpetual motion'[23], but his argument eventually dismisses this idea, claiming that in his experience travel is pure hard work. He says,

> For the notion that travel is a pleasure in itself, famously worth doing for its own sake, is a thoroughly peculiar one. After all, travel is the same word historically, as travail, It is toil and sorrow'[24] .

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[14] Freya Stark, *The Valleys of the Assassins* (1936; London: Arrow Books, 1991). For the purposes of this introduction, abbreviated to *V.A.*

[15] Vita Sackville-West, *Passenger To Teheran* (1926; London: Arrow Books, 1991).

[16] D.H. Lawrence, *Sea and Sardinia* (1921) in *D.H. Lawrence and Italy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985). For the purposes of this introduction, abbreviated to *S.S.*

[17] Lawrence Durrell, *Prospero's Cell* (London: Faber and Faber, 1945).

[18] Peter Matthiessen, *The Snow Leopard* (1979; London: Collins Harvill, 1989).

[19] Robyn Davidson, *Tracks* (1980; London: Vintage, 1992).

[20] Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia* (1977; London: Pan Books, 1979).

[21] Peter Conrad, *Down Home* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988).

[22] Adams, p. 293.

[23] Raban, 'Never So Homely', p. 2.

[24] 'Never So Homely', p. 3.

Numerous travel writers from Robert Louis Stevenson to Bruce Chatwin, however, have argued for the importance of the idea of movement in their travels, as well as the notion of travel for travel's sake. Indeed, one of the greatest motivators of travel in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries seems to be the simple desire for motion. Robert Louis Stevenson states in *Travels With a Donkey* (1879), 'For my part I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake'[25]. In *The Songlines* (1987), Bruce Chatwin champions nomadism and finds the source of his own wanderings in the rootlessness of his ancestors:

> . . . horizon struck ancestors who had scattered their bones in every corner of the earth. Cousin Charley in Patagonia; Uncle Victor in a Yukon gold camp; Uncle Robert in an oriental port; Uncle Desmond . . . who vanished without trace in Paris; Uncle Walter who died chanting . . . in Cairo.[26]

D.H. Lawrence claims, in *Sea and Sardinia*:

> Comes over one an absolute necessity to move. And what is to move, to move in some particular direction. A double necessity then: to get on the move and to know whither (*S.S.* p. 1).

Freya Stark, in the preface to *The Valleys of the Assassins*, supports Stevenson's notion of travel for travel's sake:

> I may confess at once that I had never thought of why I came, far less of why I came alone: and as to what I was going to do - I saw no cause to trouble about a thing so nebulous beforehand . . . . I know in my heart of hearts that it is a most excellent reason to do things merely because one likes the doing of them (*V.A.* p. 7).

In a letter to her cousin, Edward Stanley, Gertrude Bell posits a similar belief to Stark's which provides an unconscious reason for her extensive travels:

> What is the use of bending all one's energies to the uncongenial thing? One is likely to do little enough anyway, but if half one's time is taken up persuading oneself one likes it or at least conquering distaste there is very little left to achieve success with.
>
> Find the thing that needs no such preparatory struggle and then do it for all you are worth if you can.[27]

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[25] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Travels With a Donkey* (1879; London: Arrow Books, 1991), p. 57.

[26] Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (1987; London: Pan Books, 1988), p. 7.

[27] Gertrude Bell, *The Letters of Gertrude Bell*, ed. Lady Bell (1927; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 143.

Raban says in 'Road to Utopia', 'Travel in its purest form requires no certain destination, no fixed itinerary, no reservations and no return ticket, for you are trying to launch yourself on to the haphazard drift of things and put yourself in the way of whatever chances the journey may throw up'[28]. Chance, the haphazard and change, are surely what Fussell's between-the-war travellers were seeking, but it is the actual process of the travel, the physical journey, that is of importance to the resultant narratives. Freya Stark comments on this in her conversations with Alexander Maitland, when speaking about the difference between earlier and contemporary travellers:

> . . . a family would set out on a pilgrimage . . . . The destination was important, but the journey itself was the great thing . . . . Nowadays the majority of people who travel are interested only in the destination . . . the real traveller still values the journey for its own sake, not simply as a means to an end. To the real traveller, the horizon is irresistible.[29]

Stark's own travels are representative of those of earlier times. Her initial journeys in Persia were made on the backs of mules with only a guide for company. Gertrude Bell also travelled in a similar manner, riding on horseback through the Jebel Druze and later through other areas in Persia and Arabia. Their travel narratives are detailed discussions, not of places and destinations, but of the journeys themselves.

Rose Macaulay's *The Towers of Trebizond* light-heartedly parodies the travels of Stark and Bell showing how widely known and popular these writers had become, and providing an interesting commentary on writing about travel. In one section of the book, the narrator rides her camel from Hopa to Trabzond, alone, much as Bell and Stark rode their animals in Persia and Arabia. Throughout the book, the narrator makes illuminating comments about the state of travel and travel writing. Having discussed how many of their friends are in Turkey at the same time, writing their Turkey books, the narrator comments:

> Aunt Dot said she must get down to her Turkey book quickly, or she would be forestalled by all these tiresome people. Writers all seemed

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[28] Raban, 'Road to Utopia', pp. 15-16.

[29] Freya Stark quoted by Alexander Maitland, *A Tower in a Wall - Conversations with Dame Freya Stark* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1982), p. 62.

> to get the same idea at the same time. One year they would all be rushing for Spain, next year to some island off Italy, then it would be the Greek islands, then Dalmatia, then Cyprus and the Levant, and now people were all for Turkey .[30]

There are connections not just with the fictional creations of Macaulay's novel here, but with real travel writers: Lawrence Durrell, Henry Miller, and Patrick Leigh Fermor's obsessions with Greece; Norman Douglas and D.H. Lawrence's writings about Italy, even Stark's re-tracing of Bell's tracks in Persia.

While Trebizond comes to represent something mystical, romantic, incredibly beautiful and ultimately unattainable, the book itself focuses on the journey as much as on Trebizond. At the end of chapter one, the narrator says, 'I agree with those who have said that travel is the chief end of life'[31]. By the end of the novel, it is the notion of journey that is uppermost - Laurie has travelled and travailed, but above all, she has journeyed geographically, physically, emotionally and mentally.

Since the time of Freya Stark's journeys and writings, the possibility of travel to places little known and unvisited by outsiders has decreased sharply. Fussell devotes a whole chapter of *Abroad* to the evolution that has occurred from exploration to travel to tourism. Fussell is very negative about travel possibilities in the late twentieth century, claiming that 'travel is hardly possible anymore'[32]. This sentiment is echoed in many of the works of both twentieth century travel writers and those theorising about travel writing. Fussell says:

> All three make journeys, but the explorer seeks the undiscovered, the traveler that which has been discovered by the mind working in history, the tourist that which has been discovered by entrepreneurship and prepared for him by the arts of mass publicity. The genuine traveler is, or used to be, in the middle between the two extremes. If the explorer moves toward the risks of the formless and the unknown, the tourist moves toward the security of pure cliche. It is between these two poles that the traveler mediates, retaining all he can of the excitement of the unpredictable attaching to exploration, and

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30 Macauley, p. 21.
31 Macauley, p. 16.
32 Fussell, p. 37.

> fusing that with the pleasure of "knowing where one is" belonging to tourism.[33]

Fussell goes on to discuss the rise of tourism in the twentieth century, attempting to differentiate in more detail between the traveller and the tourist. He provides a very scathing definition of the tourist: 'One who has hotel reservations and speaks no French'[34], and 'The resemblance between the tourist and the client of a massage parlor is closer than it would be polite to emphasise[35]. Barry Curtis and Claire Pajaczkowska suggest more positively, that 'tourism implies a circular confirmation of self-identity' in contrast to travel, where 'the self is changed by the experience of alterity encountered in a dialectic of difference'[36].

Fussell's perception of inevitable and irrevocable change and the corresponding movement from travel to tourism, however, is manifest in many other travel writers. In his critique of English travel books of the twentieth century, *Loneliness and Time: British Travel Writing in the Twentieth Century*, Mark Cocker calls the present day, the 'Coca-Cola Age' after a phrase from Patrick Leigh Fermor, and cites other writers with similar negative views about the potential for travel today. He provides examples from Norman Lewis, Wilfred Thesiger, Lawrence Durrell and Patrick Leigh Fermor. Cocker discusses how many of these writers, whilst exploring and subsequently celebrating something unique and special in a place or a culture, helped to contribute to the 'ruin' of that place by advertising it through their writing. He quotes Wilfred Thesiger who revelled in isolation, making solo explorations of Arabia and befriending Arab tribespeople: 'I realise that the maps I made helped others, with more material aims, to visit and corrupt a people whose spirit once lit the desert like a flame'[37].

Cocker maintains that the relationship between traveller, travel book and tourist is a highly complicated one, but he goes on to suggest that the

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[33] Fussell, p. 39.
[34] Fussell, p. 41.
[35] Fussell, p. 42.
[36] Barry Curtis and Claire Pajaczkowska,' 'Getting there': Travel, time and narrative', *Travellers' Tales*, p. 206.
[37] Wilfred Thesiger, *Arabian Sands* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), p. 82, quoted in Mark Cocker, *Loneliness and Time: British Travel Writing in the Twentieth Century* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1992), p. 249.

pessimistic views expressed by travel writers and theorists are perhaps not as grim as they would have it. He provides examples of travellers from different eras bemoaning the changing nature of a particular place, showing in the process, that whilst people agree changes have occurred, it has taken a very long time for these to take place. Using Robert Byron and Patrick Leigh Fermor's depictions of Greece to illustrate his point, Cocker says, 'If humankind had become homogeneous in Byron's day, [1931], it is difficult to see how the same process could recur all over again in Fermor's [1966]'[38].

In contrast to the aforementioned authors and critics, Sunpreet Arshi, Carmen Kirstein, Riaz Naqvi and Falk Pankow arrive at a very different perspective in their article, 'Why Travel?' Instead of the nostalgic reverie of Fussell, or the hierarchy implicit in the comments of the others, their discussion of mass-tourism highlights the naturally appropriative nature of travel in general: 'mass-tourism . . . [makes] explicit the consumption (economic, scopic and textual) which all forms of travel are founded upon'. They go on to suggest that:

> 'tourism' challenges the purported use value of 'travel' and shows that its 'value' mechanisms are not intrinsically meaningful, or even meaning-giving, but that it functions as signification and certainly not as exchange.[39]

They point out that the crowd-nature of tourism is in opposition to the inherent individualism of the travel text, and that the consumption implicit in mass-tourism is merely a twentieth century extension of the consumption of place and people that occurred in any imperial act of exploration in previous centuries (physical act or discourse). Travel, falling as it does between the two extremes of exploration and tourism, is tarred by the same brush in their view.

Like travel, travel writing also seems to exist between two polarities, science and fiction. These have traditionally been viewed as opposites, with science defined as objective and 'real' at one end of the literary spectrum, and fiction, being subjective and imaginary, at the other. With developments in literature and literary theory in the twentieth century, such dichotomies have been examined more closely and the ideologies of each have been emphasised. Post-colonialism has forced a reappraisal of

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[38] Cocker, p. 251.
[39] Arshi, Kirstein, Naqvi and Pankow, 'Why Travel?' p. 237.

Eurocentric beliefs and actions, and post-structuralism has altered the way we look at ideology, establishing a new relativism. Ideologies, such as the scientific doctrine of the nineteenth century, have come to be viewed as constructions, and so too, have the cultures depicted by eighteenth and nineteenth century explorers; yet twentieth century travel writing often still exhibits the traces of the scientific urge which nourished its early growth.

In *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel,* Adams provides a comprehensive summary of the history of, and developments in, travel writing from ancient times to the 1800s. He provides numerous reasons for travel over the centuries - pleasure, trade, adventure, war, missionary work, religious persecution, curiosity and so forth. Adams cites two events as crucial to an increase in travel and travel writing: the Crusades and the development of the Khan empire in the 1200s, both of which opened up new worlds. It was the Khan empire that set the directions for travel in the Renaissance and after, for trade and exploration were fundamental to later travel. Colonial expansion in the Renaissance, due to exploration, also resulted in a corresponding growth in travel documents, of which Dampier's *A New Voyage around the World* is representative[40]. Such travel writing has exploration and discovery as its motivating force, and this has influenced the subsequent developments in travel writing. The texts of Stark and Matthiessen, for instance, are accounts of exploration in areas of the world little travelled by Europeans, and both writers emphasise the role science plays in their journeys. Stark uses the science of archaeology to provide a seriousness and legitimacy to her travels. As a naturalist and explorer, Matthiessen's journey is ostensibly scientific, accompanying and helping a renowned biologist in his scientific research.

While, as I shall show, the overall tenor of Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* is far from scientific, in some sections Matthiessen appears similar to the white, European males who led expeditions in the 1700s and 1800s, funded by private fortunes, royalty or societies such as the Royal Geographical Society. The resultant literature of these expeditions focused on the recording and documentation of discovery, and was primarily influenced by notions of empire and colonialism. The documentation that occurred tended to highlight oddity, exotica and difference, and was

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[40] Adams provides a comprehensive discussion of the origins and influences of travel writing prior to the 1800s in *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel.* See in particular, chapter two.

grounded, not only in Eurocentric notions of discovery, but in eighteenth-century scientific rationalism.

According to Mary Louise Pratt in her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, the 1730s saw the first inland exploration by Europeans after an initial focus on maritime exploration. This focus on land exploration coincided with the development of Linnaeus's system of classification and a growing interest in natural history. Pratt depicts tribes of Linnaean disciples disappearing into the 'wildernesses' of the new world collecting, classifying and documenting. She claims:

> specimen gathering, the building up of collections, the naming of new species, the recognition of known ones, became standard themes in travel and travel books[41],

and that, as a consequence, 'travel and travel writing would never be the same again'. This classifying of the natural world was a system whereby order was seen to be brought to chaos, and was very much a form of European appropriation.

For explorers like James Cook and Mungo Park, writing was an inevitable consequence of exploration. With the rise in empiricism and the development of a science-based ideology of society, extending the boundaries of the new world involved a responsibility to not only gather information, but to describe and share discoveries with the British public. According to David Mackay:

> . . . although journals of voyages of discovery were not new, with Cook they achieved a greater degree of sophistication. . . . All members of such parties [scientific members of voyages such as the Endeavour undertook] were impressed with the need for close observation and the gathering of precise information. All were instructed to keep journals recording their experiences[42].

Control was achieved, then, not just through the accumulation and documentation of knowledge, or physical colonisation, but by capture in discourse. Thus, travel to the new world - whether the Americas, Africa, Asia or the Antipodes - automatically entailed the writing of it.

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[41] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 27.

[42] David Mackay, *In the Wake of COOK - Exploration, Science and Empire, 1780-1801* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1985), p. 8.

Growing belief in the value of classification and collecting (of flora, fauna, native peoples, customs, geography), as well as the Baconian idea of the utilitarianism of science, resulted in an evolving partnership between exploration and science. Inevitably, much of the travel writing of the eighteenth century tended to have science as its motivating force. This relationship continued into the nineteenth century and was reinforced by the Victorian collector/traveller/writer. Many of the Victorian female travellers legitimised their travels with reference to science. Mary Kingsley, for instance, produced documents that are detailed observations of local West African culture and fauna, and which were the completion of her father's natural history documents. Her real reason for going to Africa, however, was to escape an unbearable and boring home life, and to finally do something for herself instead of devoting her life to the male members of her family[43]. Freya Stark, like Gertrude Bell before her, mapped, charted and named the 'unknown' areas of Persia through which she travelled, and focused on the archaeology of the area, using 'science' in a similar way to Kingsley. As Adams says, 'although the debt of geography to the literature of travel is immense and well-documented, the debt of science is just as great'[44].

Coupled with this crossover between travel writing and science is the connection between travel and fiction. Adams' book is the obvious source for a detailed analysis of this - his basic premise is that the relationship between the novel and the travel narrative is symbiotic; each has fed and influenced the other from classical times. He cites Bougeant, Voltaire, and Swift as early examples of the use of parody of the travel genre in novels. One of my major interests is the relationship between writers of fiction and the literature of travel. All the travel writers studied here can be described as literary travellers, having published between them letters, autobiographies, novels, poetry, articles, non-fiction studies and essays as well as other travel books. Freya Stark is the only author who is not a novelist, although she has published four volumes of autobiography, eight volumes of letters and eleven travel books, as well as collections of essays and history. In the case of D.H. Lawrence and Lawrence Durrell, fiction is the defining and motivating force of their personal and writing lives.

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[43] See Marion Tinling's *Women Into the Unknown* (London: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 149.

[44] Adams, pp. 78-80.

Sackville-West is known primarily as a novelist and poet, Davidson has written a collection of essays and a novel, Chatwin produced six books, both fiction and non-fiction, in the space of a decade and Conrad is a critic and novelist with ten books to his name.

Adams comments: 'the journey structure so important to that great mass of long fiction often called "Romance" is marvelously [sic] like the form of the *recit de voyage*'[45]. The quest and the journey have always been central themes in fiction, from classical times to the present day, and as has been discussed, are obviously fundamental to travel narratives. John Alcorn concurs:

> The travel tale is hardly new to English literature: from Chaucer to Mandeville, from Hakluyt to Captain John Newton, from Nashe's Jack Wilton to Smollett's Roderick Random, from Sterne's sentimental voyager to George Borrow's gypsy wanderer, the travel book - both as fiction and as reportage - had waxed and waned with an impressive durability[46].

As Alcorn suggests, there are countless examples of fictional or documentary texts based on the notion of travel, or purporting to be 'real' accounts. *Mandeville's Travels* (c.1357) for example, is a collection of the travels of other men, told second-hand as though undertaken by the author himself. In fact, the text 'contains a sufficient number of inaccuracies and inconsistencies to make it extremely improbable that its author ever left his native Europe'[47]. (In contrast to *Mandeville's Travels* is *Hakluyt's Voyages* - the original published in 1589 - which is a selection of first-hand accounts of great voyages, edited by the Elizabethan Richard Hakluyt. Unlike the fictional authorship of Sir John Mandeville two centuries earlier, Hakluyt's authorship was scholarly and 'scientifically' based).

The novel, with its defining moments in the eighteenth century, is inevitably connected to the mode of travel writing, whether through parody or simply by drawing on some of its themes and concerns. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Defoe's *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, and its sequel, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson*

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[45] Adams, p. 149.
[46] John Alcorn, *The Nature Novel from Hardy to Lawrence* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 43.
[47] Michael, D. Seymour, introduction, *Mandeville's Travels* (1357; Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. xiv.

Crusoe, are representative of such connections. Defoe also wrote *A New Voyage Around The World* and *The Four Voyages of Captain George Roberts*. Smollett's *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* and *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* draw on his own continental travels, (indeed, Adams claims that in Smollett's work the travel book and the novel become one). Poetry, too, has strong connections with the travel narrative. In her book, *The Way to Xanadu*, Caroline Alexander suggests that the inspiration for Coleridge's poems 'Kubla Khan' and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* came from contemporary travel narratives[48].

The ambiguous nature of *Mandeville's Travels*, part-way between fact and fiction, may be an inevitable consequence of writing about travel to places other than the known and the familiar. In Mandeville's time, when the written word was highly revered, 'virtually any account could be uncritically transcribed and believed' and thus, *Mandeville's Travels* 'popularised many of the facts and fictions of our classical inheritance [such as]. . . the weeping crocodile [and] the men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders . . . '[49]. The selection and focus that occurs in any travel narrative inevitably forces questions about the boundaries between fact and fiction, and the influence of the beliefs and values of the observer/writer. For instance, how reliable are the first-hand accounts of Hakluyt's authors? One of Hakluyt's travellers writes:

> Amongst these trees night by night, through the whole land, did show themselves an infinite swarm of fiery worms flying in the air, whose bodies, being no bigger than English flies, make such a show and light as if every twig or tree had been a burning candle. In this place breedeth also wonderful store of bats, as big as large hens . . .[50]

Many of the explorers/travellers/writers, particularly in the Victorian period, aimed for a scientific, factual documentation of their travels, but were unconsciously influenced by developing discourses, which we would now term Orientalist and imperialist, and which brought them closer to

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48 Caroline Alexander, *The Way to Xanadu* (1993; London: Phoenix, 1994). In fact, this idea originated with Jonathan Livingstone Lowes in his book *The Road to Xanadu*.

49 Seymour, p. xix.

50 John Cooke, 'The famous voyage of Sir Francis Drake into the South Sea and therehence about the whole globe of the earth, begun in the year of Our Lord, 1577', *Hakluyt's Voyages*, selected by Richard David (1589; London: Chatto and Windus, 1981), p. 532.

fiction. Stark, for example, combines scientific modes of discourse with fiction, resulting in what can be described as an Edwardian adventure genre.

It becomes impossible to discuss Stark's text without some discussion of theories which have altered the critical perception of her work. The notion of readership is important here. In Stark's day, her readers[51] assumed that an honest approach in the writing would result in a true-to-life text; there was no question whether there was any influencing ideology or whether the written word could accurately represent 'reality'. Having been raised on a diet of exploration texts, the public expected excitement and oddity in travel literature. Post-colonial theory, however, has emphasised the appropriative nature of much travelling and travel writing. Like the science and fiction-based travel narratives of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Freya Stark's narrative tends to emphasise difference. As Dea Birkett claims in *Spinsters Abroad*, the common Eurocentric perception of the rest of the world in the Victorian period was a dissolving of 'lands and people . . . into the Exotic, the Savage, and the Unknown'[52]. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1977)[53] has been one of the most influential works in raising questions about Western ways of seeing and writing about the 'Other'. Stark's emphasis on the romance of Persia is an example of the Orientalism that Edward Said has defined as implicit in Western perceptions of the East, and the discourses of patriarchy and imperialism evident in *The Valleys of the Assassins* reveal a degree of unselfconscious appropriation.

Using Stark as the point of comparison enables me to look at the ideological aspects of writing about journeys and places taken by other authors. It is perhaps impossible to write about a place other than the known and the familiar without any form of appropriation. Stark's documenting in *The Valleys of the Assassins* reveals a very obvious appropriation, but even in the mythologising of Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard*, there is an unconscious form of appropriation occurring. Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* appears to be the only text that escapes, in that he knows he is writing about a fiction - he is aware that his Patagonia is finally a language construction; a transaction between writer and reader. As Trevor Barnes and James Duncan point out:

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51 In the preface to *The Valleys of the Assassins*, Stark addresses her readers as 'the Public' with a capital P.

52 Dea Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 122.

53 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978).

> Pieces of the world . . . do not come with their own labels, and thus representing 'out there' to an audience must involve more than just lining up pieces of language in the right order. Instead, it is humans that decide how to represent things, and not the things themselves . . . The consequence is that writing is constitutive, not simply reflective; new worlds are made out of old texts, and old worlds are the basis for new texts.[54]

Post-colonial theory has helped to reveal the Eurocentric nature of much writing about other cultures as well as the literature of travel itself, and changing beliefs and specific twentieth century events (the two world wars, the dismantling of empire, new trends in literature, theory and philosophy, a raised consciousness about the environment, and changes in concepts of religion and spirituality arising from altered perceptions of the nature of society, the world and reality), have helped to forge new trends in travel writing. Science and fiction remain as important to travel writing as ever, but they can be seen as threads in a new formation, rather than fixed polarities. Stark's writing seems to sit at the metonymic end of the metonymic-metaphoric spectrum as articulated by David Lodge[55] - there is a linear metonymic procedure of the conventions of 'realism' occurring - and can be seen to be the point from which the other seven texts stem in terms of their observations and representations of difference. Thus, Durrell's *Prospero's Cell,* written by a late modernist and a poet, tends towards the metaphoric end of the spectrum, as does Bruce Chatwin's text.

These developments are linked to changes in the way the journey is perceived in the twentieth century. While the emphasis has conventionally been on a physical or geographical journey, there has always been a corresponding concern to some degree with a spiritual, psychological or intellectual journey. However, in the twentieth century, the emotional or spiritual aspects of the journey start to achieve even more prominence than the physical journey; the journey or travel becomes a metaphor for inner exploration or intellectual thought[56].

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[54] Trevor Barnes and James Duncan, eds., *Writing Worlds: discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 2-3.

[55] David Lodge, 'The Language of Modernism: Metaphor and Metonymy', *Modernism*, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp. 481-496.

[56] Curtis and Pajaczkowska suggest, 'narrative structure itself can be

According to Norman Douglas, writing in the 1930s, the reader of a good travel book is 'entitled not only to an exterior voyage, to descriptions of scenery and so forth, but to an interior, a sentimental or temperamental voyage, which takes place side-by-side with that outer one'[57]. Lawrence Durrell claims, 'Journeys . . . flower spontaneously out of the demands of our natures - and the best of them lead us not only outwards in space but inwards as well. Travel can be one of the most rewarding forms of introspection'[58].

Lawrence Durrell's meditations on travel writing provide an example of this peculiarly twentieth century perspective. He emphasises the importance of identification and intuition in the traveller, commenting, 'Ten minutes of quiet inner identification will give you the notion of the Greek landscape which you could not get in twenty years of studying ancient Greek texts' and he claims that the 'target of the travel writer . . . is to isolate the germ in the people which is expressed by their landscape'[59]. It would seem that such an intention, didactic and subjective as it may be, is a result of changing perspectives from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Observation and recording have been supplemented by intuition and understanding.

These eight texts are different to those of previous centuries, above all in terms of reasons and outcomes. In a twentieth century, increasingly multi-cultural world, people no longer travel with physical discovery, appropriation, financial gain or great fame as possible end-results in mind. Nor, unless they are scientists, do they travel with a view to documenting and classifying strange species of animals or rare plants. Instead, as we have seen, there is a movement towards a consciously personal journey of specifically spiritual, emotional or intellectual dimensions, and thus the places or landscapes that writers portray are increasingly personal too. This change in the representation or portrayal of landscape and place is also partly due to developments in literary theory; post-structuralists have

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regarded as an intro-subjective journey' in *Travellers' Tales*, p. 212.

[57] Norman Douglas, *Experiments* (New York: n.p., 1925), pp. 8-9.

[58] Lawrence Durrell, *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 15.

[59] Lawrence Durrell, 'Landscape and Character', *Spirit of Place*, ed. Alan G. Thomas (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), pp. 156-158.

shown that the gap between reality and discourse is always there, and is often filled with invisible ideology.

Changing notions of the environment and new directions in writing about land have also been important in these developments in travel writing. The term land/scape, for instance, can be seen to reveal a specific cultural position - the 'scape' is influenced by a writer's particular perspectives and beliefs. Thus, Sir Stanley Baker's writings about African places in the nineteenth century are conditioned by his imperial values and motives. He writes from a white, patriarchal, privileged position, influenced by Eurocentric ideas of discovery and appropriation; his way of seeing and writing about land and place is framed by the Victorian culture. In the West, a sympathetic relationship with the land or the environment, rather than an objective and appropriative one, has since begun to develop and this has affected ways of writing about land. Romanticism, with its emphasis on the primacy and ennobling characteristics of the environment, has helped to fashion different approaches to writing about land. The landscapes that writers represent are increasingly subjective - almost landscapes of self. For example, using John Fowles' definition of landscape as 'first appear[ing] in English at the end of the sixteenth century . . . [and coming] from the Dutch landschap, meaning province or region'[60] , we can see the changing perspectives of writers across the century. Freya Stark believed that the landscape she portrayed in *The Valleys of the Assassins* was Persia; she intended to represent Persia with neutral objectivity as apparently possible in photographic evidence. The landscape of Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard*, however, is not the Nepal and Tibetan Plateau he travels through, rather it is a spiritual and emotional realm, a landscape of the mind.

Feminism has also influenced the changing directions of travel literature. Bell and Stark's travels in Persia and Arabia in the early twentieth century reveal a certain ambiguity in terms of gender. Both were treated as honorary males. While their writing reveals a veiled irony levelled at male attitudes to women, their acceptance of this role also supports patriarchy and male-centred ideology. In the 1890s, Mary Kingsley experienced a freedom in her travels that was unthinkable at home, yet she refused to champion the suffragette movement. In one sense, her public

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60 John Fowles, essay preface, *Land* (London: Heinemann, 1985), p. xv.

contempt for female suffrage ensured that male attention and potential condemnation of her own activities was avoided. The attitudes of these women travellers probably stemmed from the fact that travel and the writing of it had always been dominated by the male gender. Until the late eighteenth century, travel was the exclusive domain of the male. Travel was limited to the extremely rich or the scientist/naturalist/explorer. As colonisation took place in different parts of the world, access to these places became easier. The Grand Tour which had been the province of the rich was replaced by Cooks Tours, making Europe accessible to classes other than the aristocracy, and Baedeker's guides to foreign countries also encouraged a broadening of the ranks of travellers. As a result of this expansion, travel and the writing of it, spread to other classes and to women. From the Victorian period onward, there has been a steady increase in the number of women travellers. Many of these early female travellers journeyed with male relatives, but a large proportion also managed to travel alone. Twentieth century women travellers like Christina Dodwell, Dervla Murphy, Dea Birkett, Bettina Selby and Sorrel Wilby have written extensively about their lone journeys in remote places. In this century, female travel writers have started to speak more openly about their specifically female experiences. Such experiences and the particular ways of seeing that derive from them, provide very different perspectives from those in works by male writers. The discussion of Stark focuses on her ambiguous male/female role where gender characteristics are blurred, her emphasis on the scientific aspects of her travels, and the Edwardian-realist mode in which she writes.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PERSISTENCE OF IMPERIALISM [1]

Freya Stark and Vita Sackville-West

> We will set down things seen as seen, things heard as heard, so that our book may be an accurate record, free from any sort of fabrication. And all who read the book or hear it may do so with full confidence, because it contains nothing but the truth.
>
> Marco Polo, *The Travels*

> Surely one advantage of travelling is that, while it removes much prejudice against foreigners and their customs, it intensifies tenfold one's appreciation of the good at home, and, above all, of the quietness and purity of English domestic life.
>
> Isabella Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*

Freya Stark's *The Valleys of the Assassins*, which describes journeys she undertook in Persia in the period 1930-1932, is more typical of late nineteenth century travel books than those of the early twentieth century. Indeed, Stark's writing seems rather dated in the between-the-wars period in which she travelled and first published her work. It is a period in which English travel books were more typically written by young, moneyed, educated males. Many of these books, such as Evelyn Waugh's *Labels* (1930) and Robert Byron's *Road To Oxiana* (1937) are written in a comic and ironic vein that, as Paul Fussell says, has come to be regarded as peculiarly British. Many writers of fiction and non-fiction fled England at this time, in search of intellectual stimulation, adventure and the freedom to write in a cosmopolitan climate:

> [D.H.] Lawrence can be seen as merely the vanguard of the British Literary Diaspora, the great flight of writers from England in the 20s and 30s which deposited Gerald Brenan in Spain and Robert Graves in Majorca, Norman Douglas in Corfu; Aldous Huxley in California, Christopher Isherwood in Berlin and California, and W.H. Auden finally in New York; Bertrand Russell in China and Russia; Somerset

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[1] The Freya Stark section of this chapter formed the basis of a paper given at the Australasian Victorian Studies Association conference on Imperialism held in Auckland, 1993. It was subsequently published in the proceedings of that conference.

> Maugham and Katherine Mansfield on the Riviera; V.S. Pritchett in Paris; John Lehman and Steven Spender in Vienna; Basil Bunting in Tenerife, as well as in Paris, Rapallo, Berlin, the United States, Persia and Afghanistan; Osbert Sitwell in Italy and Edith, from 1932 to 39 in Paris . . .[2]

Freya Stark is indeed atypical by virtue of her gender alone, for Fussell names Katherine Mansfield and Edith Sitwell as the only females in his list of English literary exiles, and they are both safely in France, hardly *terra incognita* to the British. But there is another tradition into which Freya Stark does fit, for a female flight had occurred in the 1800s, although on a much smaller scale. One does not have to delve very far to become familiar with stories of English spinsters venturing into far more alien territory, and surviving to tell the tale, or to have it told for them. Figures from the early nineteenth century like Lady Hester Stanhope and Isabelle Eberhardt are relatively well-known. However, because their journeys took place at a time when travel and particularly travel writing were regarded as the province of the European male, neither woman published a travelogue. Their stories have been told subsequently, in the form of biographies.

This is not to say that this wave of Victorian female travel went entirely unrecorded in first person texts, for some of these female explorers wrote comprehensive and articulate accounts of their travels. As Mary Louise Pratt comments:

> . . . by 1828 there were enough European women travel writers in print to form a category for men to complain about . . . a literature was emerging to create specifically female relationships to North European expansionism, a female domestic subject of empire, and forms of female imperial authority in the contact zone[3].

The reign of Queen Victoria saw an increase in the number of women travellers as well as the development of a distinct female genre of travel writing. Early in the century, Maria Graham went to South America and produced two texts, *Journal of a Residence in Chile During the Year 1822* and *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil, and Residence There, during Part of*

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[2] Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 11.
[3] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 213.

1822 and *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil, and Residence There, during Part of the Years 1821, 1822, 1823*. She had written travel books on India and Rome previously. Isabella Bird explored North America and Persia and recounted her experiences in *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1879) and *Journey into Persia and Kurdistan* (1891). Marianne North travelled the world in search of botanical specimens to paint, recording her experiences in *Recollections of a Happy Life* (1892). May French Sheldon explored remote parts of East Africa, publishing *Sultan to Sultan* (1892). Mary Kingsley ventured into West Africa, an area dominated by male exploration, and wrote *Travels in West Africa* (1897) and *West African Studies* (1899)[4].

Solo exploration and the subsequent recording of it, as well as the opportunities such writing provided for examining both foreign custom and British values, were rare privileges for women in the 1800s. European expansion in the 1700s and 1800s was the domain of white males who tended to uphold the values and belief-systems of imperialism. The texts this first wave of expansion produced - explorers' journals, naturalists' texts and travel books - tend to appropriate and devalue other cultures and histories. However, the female 'expansion' that followed in the late 1800s produced a second wave of texts that partly up-hold and partly undermine the same belief systems of Empire. For instance, in relation to Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa,* Pratt argues that:

> Through irony and inversion [Kingsley] . . . builds her own meaning-making apparatus out of the raw materials of the monarchic male discourse of domination and intervention. The result . . . is a monarchic female voice that asserts its own mastery even as it denies domination and parodies power[5].

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[4] Maria Graham, *Journal of a Residence in Chile During the Year 1822* (London: Longman, 1824) and *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil, and Residence There, during Part of the Years 1821, 1822, 1823* (London: Longman, 1824).
Isabella Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1879; London: Virago, 1982) and *Journey into Persia and Kurdistan, Including a Summer in the Upper Karun Region and a Visit to the Nestorian Rayahs* (London: Murray, 1891).
Marianne North, *Recollections of a Happy Life, being the autobiography of Marianne North edited by her sister Mrs J. Addington Symonds*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1894).
May French Sheldon, *Sultan to Sultan* (London: 1892).
Mary Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (1897: London: Virago, 1982) and *West African Studies* (1899; London: Frank Kass & Company, 1964).

[5] Pratt, p. 213.

Shirley Foster claims that Victorian female travel writers were 'surprisingly iconoclastic, showing a willingness to challenge authoritative opinion, which represented the domination of public and patriarchal assumptions in their lives'[6]. Dorothy Middleton points out that some of these female travellers such as May French Sheldon and Fanny Bullock Workman were staunch feminists - indeed, one of the reasons Sheldon visited East Africa, organising an expedition on her own, was 'to demonstrate that a woman could travel as easily and as effectively as a man'[7]. Fanny Bullock Workman carried a 'Votes for Women' placard in the Karakoram. Mary Kingsley, however, was against the idea of the vote for women, yet displayed remarkable independence and self-reliance in the course of her travels and argued for the autonomy and dignity of African races. A questioning of patriarchy and imperialism, then, seems to be one of the outcomes of this increase in women's opportunities for travel in the 1800s.

Nearly all these female travellers were single or travelled alone. Maria Graham's husband died on the voyage out to South America but refused to return home, living on in that continent and returning to England at her own leisure to write about it. May French Sheldon left her husband in Naples. Isabella Bird married only after many of her travels and then continued travelling alone after her husband's death. For many of the other female travellers of this period, travel and exploration eventuated only after the loss of parents and the subsequent 'mature-orphanage' this produced. Travel, then, was a belated freedom and luxury. Seen in these terms, the act of travelling was perhaps a gesture of independence, even defiance. Critics such as Pratt and Foster argue that this independence often carries over to the texts these women produced in the form of anti-colonial values and subtle feminism.

Freya Stark, born in 1893, must have read, or at least been aware of, the exploration and texts of women like Bird and Kingsley. Stark's own texts must be read as a continuation of this female tradition, rather than as ill-fitting texts in the between-the-war period. Stark's writing shares many

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[6] Shirley Foster, *Across New Worlds* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), p. 59.
[7] Dorothy Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1965), p. 94.

of the qualities of these early female texts and the manner of her travels is that of the Victorian spinster. Stark's personal life also bears similarities to her Victorian predecessors:

> It had taken a very long effort to organise my mother with some sort of financial stability and to build up a barely sufficient income of my own - three hundred pounds a year had been my aim: and this had been accomplished with so much strain and anxiety, so many accidents, deaths and family stresses, that illness had come, a burden never again to leave me for very long. All this was the price of freedom[8].

The excerpt quoted reveals that in her domestic arrangements at home Stark assumed a male role. Similarly, many of the Victorian female travellers were expected to organise the lives of their parent/s and become responsible for them. As with her predecessors, this male role carries over into the manner of Stark's travels but it manifests itself in *The Valleys of the Assassins* in the discourses of both patriarchy and imperialism. The power relations of imperialism are, after all, very similar to those of patriarchy - where race and place are colonised in the former, women are 'colonised' in the latter. These discourses highlight a certain irony in Stark's position as privileged, lone, female traveller. Stark was remarkably free of gender restrictions in an age when feminism was gaining strength, yet her texts reveal a belief in the superiority of the masculine and a desire to erase her own femininity. At a time when the process of the dismemberment of the British Empire was well under way and notions of both imperialism and patriarchy were being questioned, Stark's travel writing appears anachronistic.

Stark's first books were published when enormous advances were being made in science. According to C.P. Snow, the thirties was one of the most 'creative period[s] in all physics'[9]. As well, major experiments were being made in literature with modernist fiction rejecting realist techniques and concerns, embracing instead subjectivity, existentialist thought and ahistoricity. Snow claims that science and literature were becoming increasingly removed from each other, indeed, had 'almost ceased to

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[8] Freya Stark, *Beyond Euphrates* (1951; London: Century Publishing, 1983), p. 2. Hereafter abbreviated to *B.E.*

[9] C.P. Snow, 'The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution' (1959), *Public Affairs* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 13.

communicate at all, [having no] . . . intellectual, moral and psychological climate . . . in common'[10]. The dichotomy that Snow perceived produced enormous debate which reached its zenith in the 1960s with passionate argument from Snow and F.R. Leavis, but it had its origins in the Victorian period. Matthew Arnold and T.H. Huxley began the debate with Huxley claiming that literature should step down from its 'pre-eminent place in education' and be replaced by science because science alone could provide the knowledge necessary 'for an age committed to rational truth and material practicality'. Arnold disagreed vehemently, arguing for 'the need of humane letters, to establish a relation between the new conceptions [of science], and our instinct for beauty, our instinct for conduct'[11]. This conflict is manifested in *The Valleys of the Assassins* as a tension between literary and scientific modes for control of Stark's discourse. Both genres are basically male prerogatives.

For many Victorians, Darwin's theory of evolution and the rise of a mechanistic age created a disillusionment with science, mainly because science seemed unable to say things about human nature and life. Yet, at the same time, exploration texts that described or documented 'newly discovered' lands were extremely popular reading - figures like Richard Burton were treated like heroes for their travel and exploration. Of course, by the 1930s, the whole notion of 'discovery' was becoming obsolete. New areas in science were being developed, however, with social-sciences such as anthropology and archaeology becoming increasingly practised. Figures such as Margaret Mead and Lord Howard Carter brought both fields of 'science' into the public imagination.

Stark's texts sit oddly in the midst of this. On the one hand, they bear no relationship whatsoever with modernist literature - much as they are dissimilar to the travel books of the period - whilst on the other, social science and the notions of exploration and discovery play very important roles. There is a strong sense in *The Valleys of the Assassins* that anthropology and archaeology legitimise the travels in the eyes of Stark and of her reading public. This emphasis on science suggests another connection with her female Victorian counterparts. Many of these women

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[10] Snow, p. 14.

[11] Lionel Trilling, 'The Leavis - Snow Controversy', *Beyond Culture* (1965; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 134.

used 'science' as a means to aid their exploration and travel. Marianne North was a recorder of botanical specimens and discovered several new species, May French Sheldon claimed she was examining local customs to ease suspicion of her journey, and Mary Kingsley used the study of science ostensibly to enable her to complete her father's work on native beliefs and religion, but her ultimate objectives seem to have been travel or exploration for its own sake.

The five chapters of Freya Stark's *The Valleys of the Assassins* chart journeys to remote areas of Persia, many of which had only been briefly ventured into, or were unexplored by Europeans. As Stark informs her readers, 'Very few Europeans travel in this country'[12]. Stark taught herself to survey and then map the landscapes she travelled through, and also had lessons in London. Stark's discussion in *Beyond Euphrates* (the volume of autobiography that corresponds to the journeys described in *The Valleys of the Assassins*) of her mapping skills and the use she put them to, reveals a certain 'discovery' ethic typical of nineteenth century explorers. Whilst Stark, generally, makes every effort to present her Persian acquaintances in terms of their cultural, political, social and religious status, there is still a tendency towards the colonial discourse of appropriation. In a letter to her mother from Lahu, Persia, Stark says:

> I was rather shocked to find yesterday, that instead of being on a little river so far, I thought, unexplored, I was on a pink dotted track which ought to have been farther east. Today, however, I hope that the mistake is the map maker's and arises from the fact that there are two passes with nearly the same name which he has got mixed. And so I still hope that this is my own river, rushing along white and green through the first trees of the jungle. I really hope this new pass is a discovery, as it is quite a good one (*B.E.* p. 208).

In *The Valleys of the Assassins*, Stark comments:

> Where, too, was the blue dotted river, which, said the map, flowed eastward into the Sardab Rud? There was no visible place for it in the landscape, and the Shikari denied its existence positively. I had hoped to introduce the name of this river into the world of geography, so that it was extremely annoying to find it non-existent (*V.A.* p. 303).

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[12] Freya Stark, *The Valleys of the Assassins* (1936; London: Arrow Books, 1992), p. 15. Hereafter abbreviated to *V.A.*

Her attitude in both these excerpts is dominating. Stark is acting out a specifically European and masculine role of the explorer/ discoverer/namer of places in the style of Richard Burton and John Speke. It is an attitude that assumes an absence of knowledge on the part of the local inhabitants, even though they act as guides and hosts. In a letter, Stark describes the country between Alamut and Teheran as 'a lovely blank on the map so far', which corresponds to that very Renaissance notion of *terra nullius*. As a result of her journeys in Luristan and Caspian Persia, recorded in *The Valleys of the Assassins*, Stark was awarded the Back Grant by the Royal Geographical Society as well as the Burton Medal by the Royal Asiatic Society. Stark was only the fourth person and the first woman to receive this award.

This belief in science and 'discovery' plays an important part in the text when Stark describes her travels in Luristan. She attempts to persuade the local people to search for intact Bronze Age skulls and explains that they were nervous about this because of the 'Persian law of antiquities which has brought punishment for illicit dealings in bronzes on to several of the tribes' (*V.A.* p. 41). Stark claims the government is making 'praiseworthy efforts to save what is left of the graves of Luristan' but hastens to explain away her own part in such dealings:

> by the time that an organised expedition can face the risk of going there, very little will be left for anyone to find; I felt that one was justified in trying to discover as much as possible while one was on the spot (*V.A* p. 42).

Stark's argument bears strong resemblance to the colonial appropriation of the 1700s and 1800s epitomised by the actions of Lord Elgin, where European 'scientific discovery' is considered more important and certainly more efficient than local culture, belief and ancestry.

This ethic of appropriation and domination occasionally manifests itself in the text in the form of derogatory comments. Stark says of the Lurs, for example:

> The Lurs, like the little girl with the curl, are very nice when they are nice, but when they are not they are horrid - and one rarely knows which it is going to be (*V.A.* p. 23).

The use of value-laden words like 'nice' and 'horrid' and the link with the nursery rhyme, give the impression of a child's mild adventure (which sits

oddly with Stark's professed concern with factual documentation), and also devalues the Lurs and their culture. Stark appears to regard the Lurs as children and there is a very strong discursive presence of a patronising, patriarchal attitude. Stark is also using a form of comic understatement, playing down the drama or potential danger - it is a form of nonchalant understatement typical of the English*man* of the days of Empire.

Stark's reliance on science supports her intention of documenting and recording as accurately as possible. Science is usually equated with objectivity, fact and accuracy, and these are qualities for which Stark aims in her text. She says in the preface to *The Valleys of the Assassins*, 'this book is intended for the Public and is therefore necessarily truthful', and this is followed with the claim that she 'has given impressions as they occurred as accurately as I could' (*V.A.* p. 8). Stark emphasises this in regard to the 'Treasure hunt of Luristan, which might otherwise be suspected of fantasy by readers unacquainted with a land so sensational' (*V.A.* p. 8). Stark's anxiety is to avoid giving false impressions. She is untroubled by any philosophical qualms about mediating one sense of reality through the language and experience of another.

Besides claiming truth and accuracy for her text, Stark emphasises its documentary nature with photographs and maps. There are five maps in the original edition of *The Valleys of the Assassins* either drawn by Stark or based on the Quarter-inch sheets of the survey of India with additions by Stark. The maps and photographs provide proof of the journeys but they also emphasise the scientific nature of Stark's travels and the contributions these travels made to western cartographic knowledge. Stark may have travelled for fun and with no particular aim in mind as she claims in her preface, but she seeks to confer a legitimacy on her travels by undertaking 'scientific' activities in the tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth century colonial discoverer and explorer.

Stark's attempts at factual documentation are considerable, with constant reference made to the customs, dress, habits, living conditions of the inhabitants of Persia:

> I watched the beauty of the two girls - a fine beauty of an old race, with small hands and thin lips and long oval faces. On their heads they wore little skull caps embroidered with beads round which they wound

> the voluminous dark turban. There were beads round their ankles too where the scarlet trousers were fastened tightly and ended in a woollen fringe over the little bare heels (*V.A.* p. 81).

Stark admires the costume and beauty of the local women frequently, and in this example she emphasises her concern with 'truthful' presentation. However, Stark qualifies this recording of dress and ornament with an observation that reveals her own bias. She says 'this is a good and decent costume for women who sit about on the ground all the time' (*V.A.* p. 81). This is an odd comment to come from a woman as free from gender restrictions as Stark, and points to the essential ambiguity in her text in relation to the female gender. It is certainly revealing in terms of Stark's views on morality - as she says in her autobiography 'I find myself with mid-Victorian views of morality, and no one to share them with except V[yvyan] H[olt], who persists in thinking me fast and modern' (*B.E.* p. 272). In a much later letter from India, Stark approves of 'the solid Victorian feeling - everything *good*, nothing of careless rapture'[13].

Because of the nature of Stark's journeys and her single status, it was necessary for her to take on the traditionally male tasks of liaison, discussion, planning and action. As a result, in the confines of her text, Stark becomes an honorary male. She deals with the Heads of villages and tribes, eats with the men rather than the women, and is privy to conversation and privileges normally given only to males (both in the societies she visits and in the conventions of the European male traveller). At the same time, of course, by virtue of her single, female status, Stark is subject to dangers from which men are considered free. Stark stresses this fact when it suits her, but her main tendency when relating her experiences or describing particular aspects of Persian life, is to dismiss her own gender, so that she occupies a kind of neutral ground. It is this ambiguous position - at once privileged as honorary male and dismissible as (and of) female - that sets up a tension in the text that manifests itself in contradictory attitudes. Stark, however, can be enormously supportive of women when she chooses, which only adds to the ambiguity of her text; whilst she often expresses positions similar to the dominant male, she also recognises the disparity in male-female relationships and the potential for the marginalisation of women. For instance, in the village of Garmrud she

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[13] Stark quoted in Caroline Moorehead, *Freya Stark* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 90.

comments on a 'red-haired, blue-eyed minx whom everyone spoiled, and who made the most of her years as if she knew how transitory they were' (*V.A.* p. 274).

This ambiguity extends to the expression of patriarchal and condemnatory attitudes towards women as a means of pointing out the 'stupidity' of such positions. For example, Stark says 'The great and almost only comfort about being a woman is that one can always pretend to be more stupid than one is and no one is surprised' (*V.A.* p. 67). Like Mary Kingsley before her, Stark makes use of 'irony and inversion' to question the prevailing assumptions.

Stark uses irony quite readily, but it is anchored in a kind of duplicity. Stark, for example, retells a conversation with one of her guides, Keram Khan. He tells her how his wife helped him escape from his enemies by shooting at them from their house, and Stark questions him further:

> 'And what did you do with your wife?' said I. ' I hope you took her with you. She seems to have been a useful sort of person.'
> 'I sent for her afterwards,' said Keram. 'I have her still,' he added, as if it were a rather remarkable fact. 'I am fond of her. She is as good as a man' (*V.A.* p. 59).

The irony of Stark's phrase, 'a useful sort of person', is missed by Keram Khan, yet Stark's complicity helps to reinforce the prevailing attitudes to women.

A similar situation is related in chapter five. Stark seeks 'solitude and peace', and uses a recent quarrel over the payment of food to achieve it. She maligns the women verbally, yet both manipulates and lightly mocks the men who support the view she expresses:

> 'Women,' I said, addressing the landscape in general . . .
> 'women are ignorant creatures'
> The assembled men, delighted to see the argument shift from household economies to the so much more obvious field of masculine superiority, unanimously rushed at the ladies and shooed them with insults . . into their proper kitchens below (*V.A.* p. 287).

It is a reworking of prejudice to create a desired situation at the time, as well as humour in the later writing of the incident. However, while Stark's

words are 'tongue-in-cheek', there is a strong sense of Stark erasing her own gender.

It would appear that Stark is negotiating ideas of gender throughout her text. She is not a nineteenth century female, nor is she completely easy with her position as a twentieth century female, and this leads to a conflict in her gender position; she attempts to be female and male at once. Stark's struggle with gender leads directly to the future positions of female travel writers such as Robyn Davidson and Dervla Murphy. Davidson is proud of her femaleness, yet desirous of acquiring what she sees as more masculine characteristics. Murphy, however, emphasises and revels in her own femaleness, for example she recounts an incident where her gender is questioned and her response is to bare her breasts to prove that she is a woman[14].

As Caroline Moorehead points out in her biography, Stark seemed to value the company of men far more than women. Moorehead says: 'By the end of the thirties, Freya had very strong views as a traveller, she did find most women irritating and unquestionably preferred men . . .'[15] (The problem of too large a number of guests at her 70th birthday party was solved by eliminating women from the guest list). Stark's view seems to be an essentially Victorian one where the position of power is held by the male. She assumes this dominant position in her text, throughout which a patriarchal discourse prevails. This is off-set, though, by the value Stark gives to the beauty, custom, dress and manners of women - not simply appropriative - and the humour she levels at certain masculine assumptions.

The colonial discourse of appropriation that is evident in the text is emphasised, not only by Stark's belief in science and her adoption of a patriarchal pseudo-male role, but by the Orientalism of many of the images Stark employs. *The Valleys of the Assassins* opens with a preface which acts as a romantic prelude to the main body of the text. Stark claims a gift of the *Arabian Nights* as the 'original cause of trouble' - a significant work of fiction that conjures the exotic and the fantastic. This is followed with a

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[14]Recounted in Dervla Murphy, *Cameroon With Egbert* (London: John Murray, 1989).
[15] Moorehead, p. 62.

metaphor of a flame being fanned into life until it 'blew with a blaze bright enough to light my way through labyrinths of Arabic, and eventually to land me on the coast of Syria . . .' (*V.A.* p. 7). Once again, a romantic image is offered, one that the reader associates with fairy tales and impossible journeys, and which sits oddly with the claims Stark has already made for documentary fact.

Ideas of romance and difference are echoed in the opening of chapter one:

> In the wastes of civilization, Luristan is still an enchanted name. Its streams are dotted blue lines on the map and the position of its hills a matter of taste. It is still a country for the explorer (*V.A.* p. 13).

Stark's phrase 'a matter of taste' reveals she has no appreciation of Luristan as an entity with its own reality. Luristan becomes a fiction in the mind of the individual - yet this is in contrast to Stark's professed intent of documentary realism:

> As the aim of the Persian government is to have them all dressed a la ferangi in a year's time, with peaked kepis and the Shah's portrait stamped on the lining, *it is worth while perhaps to give a picture of them as far as possible* before too much tidiness spoils them (V.A. p. 13, my italics).

There is a conflict here between the subjectivity of personal preference and the objectivity of mirror-image representation. It is a manifestation of the science/humanist see-saw. Stark claims to be concerned with truth and verisimilitude, with the single Absolute Truth of a turn-of-the-century realist. She has no hesitation about believing that she will be able to see and record things as they are, and yet at the same time, she consciously attaches her own preconceptions to the landscape, imaging Persia as exotic and 'unreal'.

Stark's aim appears to be two-fold, then. Whilst she is concerned with presenting an accurate 'picture' of the place and people, she is also aiming for an entertaining, semi-humorous and exciting account that is necessarily selective. Hers is a form of discourse that has close parallels with the pseudo-documentary Edwardian Realist fiction of writers like Rider Haggard, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling. In this respect, Stark is the intrepid female-as-male hero, taking on a fictional tone borrowed from Edwardian writing with additions of the Boy's Own

Adventure tradition. Thus, her text is a combination of adventure fiction and confident 'factual' realism - a mixing of science and fiction. The chapter titles emphasise this: 'The Hidden Treasure', 'The Assassin's Castle of Lamiasar' and 'The Throne of Solomon'.

Stark's emphasis on romance throughout the text and her reference to the *Arabian Nights* in the preface, is a conscious evocation of unreality and fantasy. James and Nancy Duncan make a pertinent comment on this kind of representation:

> As Westerners we are burdened with layers of orientalist discourse which blind us to non-Western realities: tropes of time travel which invite us to 'step back in time' and tropes of emptiness which allow us to discover new worlds as if they were neither uninhabited or, if not, then at least 'uncontaminated' by Western culture'[16]

In her critique of travel writing beginning with expansionist activity in the 1700s, Pratt develops a similar argument to the Duncans as she claims that these tropes of emptiness were consistently employed in exploration writing and that they enabled a kind of guilt-free appropriation to occur.

In the twentieth century, travel writing is not generally linked with colonial or expansionist motives as it was in the 1700s and 1800s, yet it would seem from Stark's text that a similar attitude is present. Whilst Stark does not appropriate by emptying the landscape of its inhabitants as many nineteenth century male explorers did, she does reveal her own biases, insisting on the 'discovery' of unmapped places, the archaic nature of Persian life, the dominance of the male, and the 'rightness' of a British presence in Persia. The whole notion of Empire was very important to Stark, as her autobiography bears witness:

> Here and there on the ground we still found traces of war; shell-cases, and an English button - strange scatterings of Empire on the Arab desert. One can't help feeling pleased at being English when seeing this peaceful holding of the land, the police and roads, and air routes where before were only desert raiders (*B.E.* p. 314).

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[16] James and Nancy Duncan, 'Ideology and Bliss', *Writing Worlds: Discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape*, eds. Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 36.

As Foster acknowledges in *Across New Worlds*, 'political stance can determine not only the discourse but also the focus of travel writing'[17]. By extension, then, the writing of a place or landscape can be seen as ideological. Much of the male European exploration writing of the 1700s and 1800s is manifestly political and reveals the imperialist ideologies of the time. One to two centuries later, Freya Stark's text which purports to be an objective documentation of her travels and the culture, history and landscape of Persia, reveals very acutely through its discourses of patriarchy and power, the persistence of imperialism.

Vita Sackville-West is an altogether different type of traveller from Freya Stark. Although she shared the same destination and travelled at a similar time, Stark travelled in Persia on foot and by mule, mapping much of the country she passed through, while Sackville-West travelled by motor and with European friends. Sackville-West made her trip to Persia in 1926 to visit her husband Harold Nicholson in Teheran. The book which deals with her trip to Persia, *Passenger To Teheran*[18] also describes the journey there and back from England.

The titles and chapter titles reveal something of the differences between the two texts. *The Valleys of the Assassins* is a geographical title that conjures danger and romance, and suggests exploration. *Passenger to Teheran* names the destination but focuses on the position of the author/narrator/character. The word 'passenger' in the title suggests that Sackville-West is passive, rather than an active initiator of events or an explorer. Where Stark's chapter titles suggest adventure in the style of Rider Haggard, Sackville-West's are prosaic and to-the-point: 'Introductory', 'To Egypt', 'To Iraq', 'Into Persia', 'Round Teheran', 'To Isfahan', 'Kum', 'The Coronation of Reza Khan' and 'Russia'.

While her gender distinguishes Sackville-West, like Stark, from many of the between-the-war travel writers, the manner of her journey and the type of travel book she wrote show Sackville-West to be a fairly typical traveller of the period. Certainly, many of the elements she includes in her text, such as the necessities she prescribes for travel, label her as a wealthy

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[17] Foster, p. 68.

[18] Vita Sackville-West, *Passenger To Teheran* (1926; London: Arrow Books, 1991). Hereafter abbreviated to *P.T.*

English, educated, between-the-wars traveller in the style of Fussell's male literary travellers in *Abroad*:

> The box which is to be opened and shut a dozen times a day must be an expanding box, and to start with it must be packed at its minimum, not its maximum capacity . . . A cushion or a pillow is a bulky bother, but well worth it for comfort . . . A Jaegar sleeping bag . . . makes the whole difference to life on a long and varied journey . . . I expected to be now boiled, now frozen; must have a fur cap and a sun-helmet, a fur coat and silk garments (*P.T.* pp. 17-18).

This is a far-cry from Stark's mule bags, maps, and single, crushed dress for best.

Unlike Stark, Sackville-West makes no attempt to legitimise her text with the trappings of science or exploration. Indeed, she is at great pains to refute any such suggestion. She says in chapter two:

> What more odious than the informative book of travel . . . . [rather] let it be frankly personal, reflecting the weaknesses, the predilections, even the sentimentalities, of the writer; let him be unashamed; let him write to his public as a familiar friend (*P.T.* p. 15).

This is rather different to Stark's aim for documentary fact and her emphasis on history, archaeology and cartography. However, like Stark, Sackville-West also images Persia as a place of romance and unreality. Both authors, then, reveal something of Edward Said's 'Orientalism':

> One January morning, then I set out; not on a very adventurous journey, perhaps; but on one that should take me to an unexploited country whose very name, printed on my luggage labels, seemed to distil a faint, far aroma in the chill air of Victoria Station: PERSIA (*P.T.* p. 16).

This is very like Stark's opening with its 'labyrinths of Arabic' that 'land [her] on the coast of Syria' (*V.A.* p. 7). And, just as Stark uses the *Arabian Nights* to explain her journey into Persia, Sackville-West recalls the *Arabian Nights* when depicting a scene in Kum, Persia. Describing a yellow rose bush she says, 'It was the magic bush of the Arabian Nights; I looked about for the singing Fountain and the Talking Bird' (*P.T.* p. 96).

This sense of romance and unreality matches Sackville-West's belief in subjective travel books and her dislike for the objective or factual. Her text is far less ambiguous than Stark's, then, in that Sackville-West admits

to bias and personal preference from the start. The first chapter of *Passenger To Teheran* is devoted to a philosophical appraisal of the purpose and effect of literature of travel. Sackville-West begins this introductory section with the statements:

> Travel is the most private of pleasures. There is no greater bore than the travel bore. We do not in the least want to hear what he has seen in Hong Kong. Not only do we not want to hear it verbally, but we do not want - we do not really want, not if we are to achieve a degree of honesty greater than that within the reach of most civilised beings - to hear it by letter either (*P.T.* p. 7).

The tone of this passage and of the ones that follow is both didactic, humorous and slightly self-mocking.

Despite Sackville-West's insistence on a subjective and emotive travel book rather than one which is informative and objective, her text shares some of the qualities of Stark's. Throughout, Sackville-West plays down the potential danger of her journey, emphasising the exhilaration she experiences instead. In the third chapter, 'To Iraq', she describes the situation after the dining car of the train in which she and her dragoman are travelling, catches alight. Like Stark, she exhibits typical English humour and understatement - a literary convention of the calm, conventional composure of the English. As well, she casts herself in the role of the capable male, whilst her dragoman becomes the anxious, excitable female:

> The train was stopped once, certainly, and some half-hearted efforts were made to put the fire out, but these being unavailing, we started off again and hoped for the best. My handsome dragoman was terribly frightened, he . . . insisted that the train would soon be 'lying down on her side'. Besides, he added, robbers were in the habit of putting boulders across the line to stop the train and plunder such passengers as might survive the accident . . . . Finally, I persuaded Nasr to go back to his own compartment . . . (*P.T.* p. 30).

A similar attitude is displayed in the following chapter 'Into Persia'. The narrator mentions well-known European travellers and explorers of the area, linking herself with them, saying:

> I was myself most vividly aware of going into Persia. The nose of the motor pointed straight at the sun; this way had come Alexander, but not

> Marco Polo, not Mme Dieulafoy, not M. de Gobineau, not even Lord Curzon. This road which lay between the two wild provinces of Kurdistan and Luristan, had, until the war, existed as a caravan route between Persia and Baghdad; no traveller dreamt of risking his property and possibly his life that way (*P.T.* p. 47).

By implication, Sackville-West *is* risking property and life, and this recklessness is emphasised by her driver's matter-of-fact reply to her question of whether he had ever been held up on the road:

> 'No', he said, he hadn't, but several of his mates had because they were fools enough to stop when ordered. 'Now if anybody comes at me', he added, 'I drive straight at them' (*P.T.* p. 48).

This masculine, devil-may-care attitude that Sackville-West adopts, culminates in retrospective bravado after just such an experience. A figure on horseback gallops straight towards them, the driver accelerates rather than stops, and they continue on, unharmed. The narrator comments:

> . . . we could not be bothered with an escort and preferred to take our chance unhindered. I was glad we had refused those escorts, for I would not want for the world to have missed the brief encounter with that marauding apparition (*P.T.* p. 53).

By using the pronoun 'we', Sackville-West suggests complicity - she and her Scottish driver share the camaraderie and sense of recklessness of a pair of English soldiers in the trenches.

Like Stark, and perhaps many of the female travellers of the Victorian period, Sackville-West represents herself as responding in a way which is both a convention of Englishness, and particularly masculine Englishness, to that which is foreign and potentially dangerous. Rather than take an escort (which is what the European males in Teheran recommend), Sackville-West thrills to the unfamiliar and the sense of freedom from comfort and restraint, foregrounding her own openness to whatever experiences her journey will offer. At the end of the text, when Sackville-West is making her way home through revolution-torn Poland, she sums up this attitude with the comment, 'I was not afraid of being shot but I *was* afraid of being indefinitely delayed' (*P.T.* p. 124). This adoption of a conventionally masculine role is emphasised by Sackville-West's use of the male gender pronoun. It is a recognition of the fact that the typical

travel writer is male, even though she is writing *A Passenger to Teheran* herself.

The similarities between *The Valleys of the Assassins* and *Passenger To Teheran* run deeper than their apparent surface differences, for both authors reveal the unconscious biases associated with alterity as well as empire. Sackville-West's initial descriptions of Persian people are of the Kurds she passes as she crosses into Persia by motor. She begins by describing the clothing and decoration of these people in much the same detailed way as Stark does, presenting them vividly and visually. However, the adjectives she uses to describe the scene as a whole are demeaning:

> From their ragged medieval appearance they might have been stragglers from some routed army . . . . They [were] . . . a wretched, starved-looking procession . . . What must [the distances] . . . have seemed to that crawling string . . . (*P.T.* p. 50).

Sackville-West engages in an Orientalist discourse that renders Persia a 'forgotten' place, simply because it is not Westernised or modernised: 'Such strange things happen in these forgotten regions of the world' (*P.T.* p. 61). In this sense, her descriptions of the Kurdish people quoted above, emphasise their 'Otherness'. Sackville-West sees these people only in comparison to her own situation - her vantage point of British, privileged, educated, wealthy - and she dwells on the difference. Stark, in contrast, acknowledges difference, but does not focus on it to quite the same degree.

Stark's attitude seems to be far more accepting of difference in the Persian culture. This may very well have to do with the fact that Stark travelled by foot or by mule rather than by car, and slept, ate and travelled with Persian people rather than with Europeans. In this respect, her understanding of the people she travelled amongst must have been much more far-reaching than Sackville-West's. Stark also lived in Syria and Baghdad to study Arabic and later Persian.

It is Sackville-West, however, rather than Stark, who comments directly on the notions of sameness and 'Otherness' in her text. For instance, Sackville-West mentions 'that national characteristic by which the English expect that everything should be the same, even in Central Asia, as

it is in England . . .' (*P.T.* p. 65) She deals scathingly with the Europeans in the Teheran community who ignore Persian culture, condemning them for transplanting English culture and traditions instead of responding to those of their host country:

> . . . the bazaars where the Europeans never go, and of which they speak with a surprised contempt. The Europeans like to pretend that they are living in Europe; each European house is a little resolute camp, and any coming and going between house and house is done with closed eyes. If Persia has to be referred to it is in a tone of grievance (*P.T.* p. 70).

Sackville-West advocates 'emptying the mind of European preconceptions [so] one is at liberty to turn around and absorb an entirely new set of conditions' (*P.T.* p. 71). This is indeed, what she attempts to do, yet as suggested earlier, the unconscious biases of her own background impede this process. The text is marked by these contradictions - openness to alterity and unconscious snobbish or elitist values. For instance, in the chapter 'Round Teheran', Sackville-West casts Persian people as sinister and with malicious intent - there is a sense of Conrad's darkness waiting to overwhelm:

> . . . one is oppressed only by the sense of dark life; then one imagines these separate, hurrying people coagulated suddenly into a mob, pressing forward with some ardent purpose uniting them and the same intent burning in all those dark eyes' (*P.T.* p. 73).

The narrator then explains away this sense of oppression with the notion of 'reversed alterity':

> This is simply an effect of one's own strangeness; there is nothing really sinister about these people. But a life of which one knows nothing, seeing only the surface, does suggest something cabbalistic and latent (*P.T.* p. 73).

Sackville-West's own prejudice, however, is revealed in the concluding statement of this excerpt, with its emphasis on class and caste:

> How curious a fact it is, that in a strange country and more especially in the east, one should be so concerned with the common people; at home one does not . . . speculate about the secrets of the slums (*P.T.* p. 73).

In her 'honesty' and subjectivity, Sackville-West reveals herself as a true child of her country, class and times.

For all her admiration of Persia and its customs, Sackville-West allows British values of empire to colour her perceptions of the coronation of Reza Khan:

> . . . one of the ministers who prided himself on his English came to ask me privately what a Rougedragon Poursuivant was, evidently under the impression that it was some kind of animal. In the amusement of the outward show of the coronation, one was apt to lose sight of the wider implications of the new regime (*P.T.* p. 100).

Her generalisations about Persian people and life bear the influence of Orientalist discourse and come alarmingly close to those made about Negroes to support the system of slavery; they reflect notions of biological essentialism:

> . . . easy to dominate, because energy meets with no opposition, they are, once dominated, impossible to use; there is no material to build with; like all weak, soft people, they break and discourage the spirit sooner than a more difficult, vigorous race . . . (*P.T.* p. 101).

Both *The Valleys of the Assassins* and *Passenger to Teheran,* then, reveal the biases of their authors, but Sackville-West's biases are not those of Stark's. Where Stark assumes the dominant gender of England and of Persia, practising the discourse of patriarchy, and supports the values of appropriation and to a certain extent, domination, Sackville-West's focuses much more on class and alterity. Whilst she attempts to embrace that which is different, and condemns other Europeans for blinding themselves to the 'realities' of Persia, Sackville-West cannot help assuming European notions of the East. She speaks of being 'at the mercy of limp Oriental methods' (*P.T.* p. 62) and belittles the Persians by referring to them as children, in much the same way Stark describes the Lurs in nursery rhyme fashion. Sackville-West says of the Persians who organise Reza Khan's coronation, ' . . . they were as pleased as children with the ingenuity of their devices . . .' (*P.T.* p. 98) and 'their anxiety to please the Europeans was endearing; there was no point however humble, on which they would not consult their English friends' (*P.T.* p. 100).

Vita Sackville-West, then, although born at the end of the Victorian era like Freya Stark, is not cast in the mould of the Victorian lady traveller as Stark is. Sackville-West is not concerned with notions of exploration or 'discovery', nor in pursuing the cause of women in her travels. Rather, she

belongs to that generation of between-the-war travellers that Fussell describes. Her ideologies, though, betray her roots, for *Passenger to Teheran* like *The Valleys of the Assassins*, reveals the persistence of imperialism well into the twentieth century.

CHAPTER TWO

THE OBSERVER OBSERVED[1], OR SUBMERGED

D.H. Lawrence and Lawrence Durrell

> I did succeed in getting away from England, and that was all I really cared about. In February 1929 almost every cause was present which can contribute to human discomfort. London was lifeless and numb . . . Talking films were just being introduced . . . There was not even a good murder case. And besides this it was intolerably cold.
>
> Evelyn Waugh, *Labels*

While some travel narratives written between the wars, such as those of Freya Stark and Vita Sackville-West, still displayed many of the characteristics of nineteenth century imperialistic discourse, this period also saw the emergence of new directions in travel writing which represent a fundamental departure from the previous era. Two authors, D.H. Lawrence and Lawrence Durrell, offer far more personal, subjective and experiential travelogues, which reflect their own social backgrounds, gender, motivations for travel and developments in contemporary literature and society at large. Both writers were part of the modernist movement, (Lawrence was an early modernist and highly idiosyncratic, whilst Durrell was a very late modernist) and made significant contributions to it, and this had enormous influence on the travel literature they produced.

As novelists or aspiring novelists, both men were concerned with writing as *art*. To them, language was much more than simply a means of recording their travels. Whilst Stark, too, aspired to literary qualities in her travel books, she was not a writer in the sense that Lawrence and Durrell were. One of the features of modernism is generally accepted to be a fundamental concern with the nature of experience and a recognition of the mediating role of the self in any telling of that experience. Neither believed in a fixed reality that could be captured in writing, and as a result there is little tendency on either part to record or document 'accurately'. They experimented in their writing with structure, ways of seeing and narrating;

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[1] This is a phrase used by David Ellis and Howard Mills in relation to Lawrence in *D.H. Lawrence's Non-fiction: Art, Thought and Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 100.

Lawrence tries to revolutionise contemporary sexual mores in his various novels. Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*[2] reveals his belief in the subjectivity of experience with its multi-layered stories, perceptions and webs of intrigue. In their travelogues, Lawrence and Durrell are much more concerned with imparting their own impressions, feelings and reflections than in documenting a particular place and customs. Their travel narratives, therefore, tend to be moving, breathing texts rather than static documents. D.H. Lawrence and Lawrence Durrell were also poets concerned with capturing the essence of a moment, a place or a landscape. It is this artistic sensibility that, more than anything, defines their travel books and sets them apart from exploration writing in general.

D.H. Lawrence travelled widely in the Mediterranean, Australia, Tahiti and Mexico. These journeys formed the basis of his various travel books and novels. Three travelogues are concerned with the Mediterranean region, *Twilight in Italy, Etruscan Places* and *Sea and Sardinia*[3]. The latter, which is considered in detail in this chapter, describes a ten day trip the Lawrences made to Sardinia from Sicily where they were living.

Lawrence travelled because of his profound disillusionment with England at this time. Ill-health as the result of tuberculosis, persecution for supposed pro-German sympathies during the First World War, and the violent reaction to the open sexuality of his books, led him to look abroad for a more congenial environment. Moreover, England in his view had become a place of cloying convention: unexciting, moralistic, without prospects, in stark contrast to the vibrancy and difference of 'abroad'. Lawrence's belief that increasing industrialisation in England was producing an emasculated and demoralised race led him to travels which were an unrequited search for a utopia free from the de-humanising aspects of the twentieth century.

For Lawrence, the Mediterranean landscape, climate and culture provided a freedom, an absence of repression and a wholeness that Britain lacked. His writing about Sardinia reveals a preoccupation with the vital relationships between men, women and landscape. For Lawrence,

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[2] Lawrence Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969).
[3] D.H. Lawrence, *Etruscan Places* (1932), *Sea and Sardinia* (1921) and *Twilight in Italy* (1916) in *D.H. Lawrence and Italy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985). Hereafter abbreviated to *E.P.*, *S.S* and *T.I.*

connections could be made between England's bleak climate and its race of people lacking, as he saw it, in virility and personal freedom. One of his short stories, 'Sun'[4], equates the sun with sexual fulfilment, female emancipation and rebirth. The main character, a woman, practises nude sunbathing in the garden of her Italian villa where she is holidaying, and comes almost to see the sun as her sexual partner. Italy for Lawrence offered a completely new world marked fundamentally by this change in climate and landscape. Just as Lawrence found the climate of the Mediterranean idyllic and healthy, so too did the vitality and freedom from convention contrast with English society.

Lawrence begins *Sea and Sardinia* with the words 'Comes over one an absolute necessity to move', although he was already living abroad at this time. In fact, Lawrence was constantly on the move, and whilst he found inspiration and stimulation in certain places, he was unable to settle permanently. He follows this initial sentence of the text with:

> And what is more, to move in some particular direction. A double necessity then: to get on the move, and to know whither (*S.S.* p. 41).

His words conjure a restlessness of body and spirit, urgency and the need for motion. This is not based on any concrete reason that Lawrence provides, other than the desire to find a place that lies outside European civilisation where people are, in his term, unselfconscious. Lawrence's use of the present tense here helps to create a profound sense of actuality, of things happening here and now. The immediacy of the present tense and the sense of 'felt' experience that permeates the text emphasise Lawrence's yearning for a particular place to satisfy his needs. It is this *searching* that defines the quality of Lawrence's text and his treatment of the 'Other'. At the same time, the Lawrences' tour of Sardinia was brief and necessitated constant movement. Thus, *Sea and Sardinia* is permeated by a combined sense of search and motion. As Fussell comments, '*Sea and Sardinia* could be said to celebrate sheer kinesis'[5].

The Lawrences spent ten days travelling to Sardinia, around it, and back to Sicily where they were living. It was a short tour marked all the time

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[4] D.H. Lawrence, 'Sun', *The Complete Short Stories*, vol. 2 (London: William Heinemann, 1955), pp. 528-545.
[5] Fussell, p. 158.

by the need for movement, and Lawrence's reconstruction of the journey emphasises this:

> At last we are down. We pass the pits where men are burning lime . . . and are out on the highway. Nothing can be more depressing than an Italian high-road . . . . The houses flush on the road under the great limestone face of this hill, open their slummy doors and throw out dirty water and coffee dregs. We walk over the dirty water and coffee dregs. Mules rattle past with carts. Other people are going to the station. We pass the Dazio and are there (*S.S.* p. 6).

While Stark aims to document a people and their culture for her reading public, as well as chart previously 'unexplored' territory for her own satisfaction and that of a waning colonial power, Lawrence is intent on 'discovering' a landscape that can satisfy his own longings for something other than the twentieth century, Westernised world. Lawrence has very different motives for travel from Stark and Sackville-West, and thus the focus of his text is quite different also. As he wrote in a review of H.M. Tomlinson's book *Gifts of Fortune*, 'We travel, perhaps, with a secret and absurd hope of setting foot on the Hesperides, or running our boat up a little creek and landing in the Garden of Eden'[6]. This was written six years after *Sea and Sardinia* was published, but this sense of frustrated search and quest is central to this text. In the chapter 'The Sea', Lawrence argues,

> Why come to anchor? There is nothing to anchor for. Land has no answer to the soul any more. It has gone inert. Give me a little ship, kind gods, and three world-lost comrades. Hear me! And let me wander aimlessly across this vivid oyster world, the world empty of man, where space flies happily (*S.S.* p. 46).

Lawrence's phrase 'empty of man' signals his dissatisfaction with an industrial world peopled by men and women who think rather than act. Lawrence's search is a passage out of the intellectual world which he sees as being essentially destructive to men and women. Fundamentally, perhaps, the choice of an island destination such as Sardinia reflects his desire for a place completely cut off from Europe, bounded only by water and the sense that, Crusoe-like, one can be completely remade. Thus, his way of viewing Sardinia is influenced by his own need, leading him to invest the Sardinian people and the landscape with qualities he wishes to see in them. This is

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[6] D.H. Lawrence quoted in John Alcorn, *The Nature Novel From Hardy to Lawrence* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 50.

very different from Stark's desire to portray things exactly as they are, but it is still a subtle form of appropriation.

Consequently, in the first chapter of *Sea and Sardinia*, and indeed throughout his travelogue, Lawrence reveals a degree of the Orientalism as described by Said, in that he invests Sardinia with the romantic qualities of remoteness and obscurity. He questions where to go and chooses Sardinia because he believes it 'is like nowhere'. Lawrence claims that Sardinia,

> has no history, no date, no race, no offering. They say neither Romans nor Phoenicians, Greeks nor Arabs ever subdued Sardinia. It lies outside; outside the circuit of civilisation .... there is an uncaptured Sardinia still. It lies within the net of this European civilisation, but it isn't landed yet (*S.S.* p. 3).

For Lawrence, Sardinia is a *terra nullius* - a kind of 'unknown' land that is different from the Europe, and particularly the England, that he knows. What he seeks is something other than Western civilisation - something more primitive and potent. Lawrence's belief in the superiority of an unmodernised, non-industrialised society leads him to describe the Sardinian people and their culture in terms of primitivism. In his desire for a halt in the movement towards 'world-assimilation' and homogeneity that he sees occurring everywhere, Lawrence embraces the difference of the Sardinians, but imposes his own expectations upon them. Thus, whilst praising the individuality of both the costume and attitudes of Sardinian mountain men, he denigrates their intelligence:

> I love my indomitable coarse men from mountain Sardinia, for their stocking-caps and their splendid, animal-brightness stupidity (*S.S.* p. 92).

In his yearning for a particular kind of relationship between a landscape and its inhabitants, Lawrence often imposes his own sensibility on to Sardinian ways of seeing. Fussell comments:

> unlike many of his contemporaries he [Lawrence] was also in search of virtue, of cosmic order, and of perfect harmony between man and his places .... Of course, he never found what he sought, or, if he thought he had found it, soon discovered that he himself had manufactured the ecstasy and laid it over the actuality of a place[7].

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[7] Fussell, p. 147.

In the chapter 'To Sorgono', Lawrence muses on the differences between the Sardinians and himself:

> But there is a gulf between oneself and them. They have no inkling of our crucifixion, our universal consciousness. Each of them is pivoted and limited to himself, as the wild animals are . . . . Their life is centripetal, pivoted inside itself, and does not run out towards others and mankind. One feels for the first time the real old mediaeval life, which is enclosed in itself and has no interest in the world outside (*S.S.* pp. 90-1).

Lawrence sees something both pre-Greek and pre-Christian in the Sardinians. The sense of immense age - so early as to be outside Western European culture - appeals to his need for something other than the mind/body schism so apparent to him in modern English life. This is the freedom that he has been seeking, and yet as a product of twentieth century England Lawrence cannot escape his own 'universal consciousness'.

In an earlier chapter, Lawrence says of the faces he sees in Cagliari, 'they strike a stranger, older note: before the soul became self-conscious: before the mentality of Greece appeared in the world'(*S.S.* p. 67). He often comments on this lack of self-consciousness that he perceives in the Sardinian people, which contrasts with his own abundant awareness of self. Lawrence perceives this lack of self-consciousness as a kind of wholeness of society - a melding together through the rituals or age-old traditions of catching and growing food, festivals of celebration or thanks, dance and music.

Lawrence's own self-consciousness leads him to write a highly personal and subjective account of his experiences. His discussions of Sardinian people are always marked by his need to make comparisons with home:

> They [Sardinian 'miners or land-workers'] talk and are very lively. Each man knows he must guard himself and his own: each man knows the devil is behind the next bush. They have never known the post-Renaissance Jesus.
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> Not that they are suspicious or uneasy. On the contrary, noisy, assertive, vigorous presences. But with none of that implicit belief that

> everybody will be and ought to be good to them, which is the mark of our era (*S.S.* pp. 89-90).

Lawrence sees in the Sardinians a people completely outside European religion, philosophy and thought, and therefore unweakened by the humanism of the Renaissance. There is almost a Nietzschean belief, here, that the modern world follows a slave mentality. In *Twilight in Italy* Lawrence develops this idea much more: 'Life is now a matter of selling oneself to slave-work, building roads or labouring in quarries . . . purposeless, meaningless, really slave-work . . . .' (*T.I.* p. 164). Lawrence's focus in *Sea and Sardinia*, however, is not so much the Sardinians' difference as his own. As an observer of the Sardinian world, he is supremely self-conscious, aware of *his* 'Otherness', his position as an outsider.

The discourse of *Sea and Sardinia*, then, is not one of appropriation or domination, but of search and belonging. In this text, the 'Other' (that which is traditionally colonised in early exploration writing) changes places with the coloniser (in this case, Lawrence). Lawrence's narrator is not the confident, nonchalant English 'man' of Stark's text, rather he is supremely self-conscious, aware of his own difference. 'Otherness' for Lawrence, then, is not simply difference to be documented in a strange country, but the tenuous relationship between inhabitant and visitor, insider and outsider. Stark, throughout *The Valleys of the Assassins*, remains supremely confident - she is in control and is documenting that which is outside or different. Likewise, Sackville-West, while overtly more self-aware than Stark, occupies the dominant position. Lawrence, however, reverses the positions, so that whilst he is free to describe the 'Other' in whatever terms he likes, he is also highly conscious of his own difference. In *Sea and Sardinia*, Lawrence himself becomes the 'Other':

> The q-b stares at every rag and stitch and crosses and recrosses this infernal dark stream of a Via Maqueda which, as I have said, is choked solid with strollers and carriages. Be it remembered that I have on my back the brown knapsack, and the q-b carries the kitchenino. This is enough to make a travelling menagerie of us . . . . a big brown knapsack! And a basket with thermos flask, etc! No, one could not expect such things to pass in a southern capital (*S.S.* pp. 18-19).

This excerpt is followed by a longer passage where Frieda (the q-b), makes a verbal attack on three Italian girls who have been following them, giggling and laughing. Frieda says to Lawrence:

> They've followed us the whole length of the street - with their *sacco militare* and their *parlano inglese* and their *you spik ingleesh* and their jeering insolence. But the English are fools. They always put up with this Italian impudence (*S.S.* pp. 19-20).

Lawrence and his wife are revealed, not as competent English explorers, in charge of all situations, but as the objects of unwanted Italian attention, even as objects of ridicule. As David Ellis and Howard Mills suggest in *D.H. Lawrence's Non-fiction*, 'It is a question of the observer observed'[8]. Lawrence ends this opening chapter with a further confirmation of their position as outsiders, as the 'Other':

> I ask a man for the Hotel Pantechino. And treating me in that gentle, strangely tender southern manner, he takes me and shows me. He makes me feel such a poor, frail, helpless, leaf. A foreigner, you know. A bit of an imbecile, poor dear. Hold his hand and show him the way (*S.S.* p. 20).

Lawrence's self-consciousness, however, is peculiarly solipsistic. It is a sensitivity to how others perceive him, to his own particular differences, not as an Englishman but as an individual. Having abandoned England in search of something better, Lawrence becomes vulnerable, belonging nowhere. The lack of self- consciousness that he perceives in the Sardinians, helps to accentuate his own acute sensitivity. At the same time, Lawrence becomes very defensive when he is treated as a representative of England. In the chapter 'The Sea', the ship's carpenter talks to Frieda and Lawrence about the price of coal which has escalated since the war. The exchange rate is also discussed, with the Sicilian complaining that English and American tourists buy whatever they want 'for nothing'. Lawrence's verbal response to the Sicilian is not recounted, but his reaction is:

> I can't walk a stride without having this wretched *cambio*, the exchange thrown at my head. And this with an injured petulant spitefulness which turns my blood. For I assure them, whatever I have in Italy I pay for: and I am not England. I am not the British Isles on two legs .... You become - if you are English - *L'Inghilterra, il carbone* and *il cambio*; and as England, coal and exchange you are treated .... Try and get them to be human, try and get them to see that you are simply an individual, if you can (*S.S.* pp. 48-9).

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[8] Ellis and Mills, p. 100.

Throughout the text, Lawrence responds to the people and the landscape constantly, but it is entirely on his own terms. The text is full of didactic, personal comments. Like Sackville-West, Lawrence appears to support the argument for subjective travel books, and is not the least concerned with objective documentation. Comparing the gender relationships of Sardinians with Italians in general, Lawrence says:

> Tenderness , thank heaven, does not seem to be a Sardinian quality. Italy is so tender - like cooked macaroni - yards and yards of soft tenderness ravelled round everything. Here men don't idealise women, by the look of things (*S.S.* p. 66).

In an earlier chapter, Lawrence proclaims,

> One realises, with horror, that the race of men is almost extinct in Europe . . . . The old, hardy, indomitable male is gone. His fierce singleness is quenched. The last sparks are dying out in Sardinia and Spain (*S.S.* p. 62).

This last comment is not an objective, analytic perception, rather it is a development of personal ideas Lawrence has held and discussed at length in his other work. This is not anthropology in Stark's sense of the term, rather it is personal bias on the part of the author.

Lawrence is not at all concerned with factual documentation. He is not seeking to provide an accurate representation of the 'reality' of Sardinia as Stark is with Persia. For instance, like Stark he is a meticulous recorder of local costume, but this is not for documentary reasons. He marvels at the brightness and individuality of the costumes, seeing in them a pride and boldness that has been lost from his own culture:

> The costumes had changed again. There were again the scarlet, but no green. The green had given place to mauve and rose. The women in one cold, stony, rather humbled broken place were most brilliant. They had the geranium skirts, but their sleeveless boleros were made to curl out strangely from the waist, and they were edged with a puckered rose-pink, a broad edge, with lines of mauve and lavender . . . What a risky blend of colours! Yet how superb it could look, the dangerous hard assurance of these women as they strode along so blaring. I would not like to tackle one of them (*S.S.* p. 137).

This is not Stark's recording for posterity, nor is it a parading of difference or oddity. Lawrence is genuinely interested in the costumes of the

Sardinian people, but sees in them reflections of character and gender; another aspect of English culture he believes is lost.

Lawrence's journey is a result of his beliefs about human nature and the twentieth century world. His preoccupation is escape or movement, and his text examines not only the physical difference of costume and habit, but differences of character, personality and consciousness, and their interrelationships with the landscape. Lawrence's perceptions of place and people are written from the perspective of his own need - thus they differ from Stark's in their intention. He has very different designs from Stark for his travel and his text - he is not concerned with providing objective, informed or correct information. Thus, many of his descriptions of landscape are accompanied by personal comments such as 'I cannot tell how the sight of the grass and bushes, heavy with frost, and wild - in their own primitive wildness charmed me' and 'It came upon me how I loved the sight of the blue-shadowed, tawny-tangled winter with its frosty stand-still' (*S.S.* p. 122).

Rather ironically, for all his desperate searching for a utopia, Lawrence is never fully able to extinguish his ties with England. Without self-consciousness, he makes constant comparisons between Sardinia and England. In some cases, these comparisons have a nostalgic tone such as in chapter two, 'The Sea', where Lawrence comments on the construction of the boat he and Frieda are sailing on to Sardinia, saying 'Good old delicate-threaded oak: I swear it grew in England' (*S.S.* p. 27). In the chapter, 'Mandas', Lawrence looks out the window of their inn and claims:

> . . . it was so like England, like Cornwall in the bleak parts, or Derbyshire uplands. There was a little paddock-garden at the back of the station, rather tumbledown, with two sheep in it. . . it was all Cornwall, or a part of Ireland, that the old nostalgia for the Celtic regions began to spring up in me. . . Strange is a Celtic landscape, far more moving, disturbing, than the lovely glamour of Italy and Greece (*S.S.* pp. 82-3).

As Lawrence searches the Mediterranean for his utopia he recognises the power that England holds over him. He is fundamentally drawn to the landscapes he has left behind.

This contradiction in Lawrence's needs becomes more obvious as the text progresses. Whilst he hankers after the warmth, openness and potency he senses in Italy, his own Englishness forces him to remain apart, preventing him from attaining any true sense of belonging. In his biography of D.H. Lawrence, Richard Aldington describes the writer as 'fearfully English, no more able to cease to be English than he could cease to be a white man'[9]. The two excerpts provided above illustrate this, and rather ironically, contrast with Lawrence's belief that Sardinia could offer something that England cannot.

As a writer of fiction Lawrence brings to his travelogues a keen sense of imagination and a concern with life, the cosmos, unity, infinity. The themes that permeate *Sea and Sardinia* are those that inform the majority of his work - movement and escape, the relationships between men and women and their landscape, industrialisation versus primitive ways of life. The nature of Lawrence, as a writer and as an artist, means that to a certain extent all of his writing, whether travelogue or novel, is a fictionalisation of experience. Every moment in the text of *Sea and Sardinia* is a *re-creation*, rather than a recording, of the travels. There are numerous passages that illustrate this in the text, such as the following:

> Italy and the panorama of Christmas clouds, night with the dog-star laying a long, luminous gleam across the sea, as if baying at us, Orion marching above; how the dog-star Sirius looks at one, looks at one! he is the hound of heaven, green, glamorous and fierce! - and then, oh, regal evening star, hung Westward flaring over the jagged dark precipices of tall Sicily: then Etna, that wicked witch, resting her thick white snow under heaven, and slowly, slowly, rolling her orange-coloured smoke (*S.S.* p. 1).

And:

> The two trains run alongside one another, like two dogs meeting in the street and snuffing one another. Every official rushes to greet every other official, as if they were all David and Jonathan meeting after a crisis. They rush into each other's arms and exchange cigarettes. And the trains can't bear to part . . . the station can't bear to part with us . . . Anywhere else a train would go off its tormented head (*S.S.* p. 14).

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[9] Richard Aldington, *Portrait of a Genius, But . . .* (London: Heinemann, 1950), p. 216.

This fictionalisation as opposed to documentation of the journey is apparent even when Lawrence describes the beginning of their passage to Sardinia by ship:

> To tell the truth there is something in the long, slow lift of the ship, and her long, slow slide forwards which makes my heart beat with joy. It is the motion of freedom. To feel her come up - then slide slowly forward, with a sound of the smashing of waters, is like the magic gallop of the sky, the magic gallop of elemental space. That long, slow, waveringly rhythmic rise and fall of the ship, with waters snorting as it were from her nostrils, oh, God, what a joy it is to the wild innermost soul. One is free at last- and lilting in a slow flight of the elements, winging outwards. Oh, God to be free of all the hemmed-in life - the horror of human tension, the absolute insanity of machine persistence (*S.S.* p. 26).

Lawrence prefaces his description with the phrase 'To tell the truth', but this is a very different type of truth to the one for which Stark aims. Lawrence's truth is much more closely aligned with Sackville-West's subjective and emotive one.

Lawrence's fictionalisation of events extends to a humorous name-giving whereby he assigns names and backgrounds to the various individuals (generally perfect strangers) they meet. Thus, in the chapter 'To Nuoro', Lawrence bestows the name 'Velveteens' on a 'dark-bearded, middle-aged man in a brown velveteen suit' whom he assumes is the jealous husband of a handsome peasant girl (*S.S.* p. 135). Throughout the chapter, Lawrence constantly refers to 'Velveteens' as though he is a character in a play he is directing. In the subsequent chapter, Lawrence and Frieda travel by bus and Lawrence plays a similar game with the bus-driver and his mate:

> How well this new man drove! the long-nosed, freckled one with his gloomy brown eyes .... And how dead he was to the rest of the world, wrapped in his gloom like a young bus-driving Hamlet . . . His mate . . . smoked his cigarette bounderishly: but at the same time, with peculiar gentleness, he handed one to the ginger Hamlet. Hamlet accepted it, and his mate held him a light as the bus swung on. They were like man and wife. The mate was the alert and wide-eyed Jane Eyre whom the ginger Mr. Rochester was not going to spoil in a hurry (*S.S.* p. 152).

This Anglicising of Sardinian people and the drawing on names from books from home, reveals Lawrence's ties with England once again. The bus-driver and his mate are no longer Sardinian and different, rather they are made familiar through identification with traditional English texts.

This characterisation of the individuals they meet on their travels is reflected in Lawrence's treatment of the landscape. In the excerpts quoted above, both the sea and the land take on human or animal characteristics. Lawrence's descriptions of Mt Etna, for example, are gendered - he proclaims that Mt Etna is the 'wicked witch' and spends two pages attempting to capture the quality of femaleness he sees in Etna. He speaks of the lemon groves and white houses of the villages, the familiar realm of the everyday world, being 'Etna's skirts and skirt-bottoms' - Etna is pictured as a Sicilian peasant girl. But the summit slopes with their snow and winds are an alien realm and Lawrence's descriptions take on a classical aspect with references to the empyrean. Ultimately, Lawrence defines Mt Etna as a female witch, a Circe who captivates men and steals their souls. He asks, 'How many men, how many races, has Etna put to flight?'(*S.S.* p. 2) and then concludes with 'Perhaps it is she one must flee from' in relation to his own desire for movement. To Lawrence, Etna is a female figure who produces discord and disharmony, whilst enchanting and captivating with her looks. What Lawrence articulates in this particular fictionalisation of the landscape is the fear of dominance by the female gender.

Yet, for all the fictionalisation of the landscape that takes place, Lawrence provides startlingly 'real' descriptions of the environment. He is a painstaking recorder of tiny details, focusing on every small incident - a miniaturist:

> The automobile took us rushing and winding up the hill, sometimes through cold, solid-seeming shadow, sometimes across a patch of sun. There was thin, bright ice in the ruts, and deep grey hoar-frost on the grass. . . . The slopes of the steep wild hills came down shaggy and bushy, with a few berries lingering, and the long grass-stalks sere with the frost. Again, the dark valley sank below like a ravine, but shaggy, bosky, unbroken (*S.S.* p. 122).

Lawrence describes villages, people and even hotel rooms with the same eye for detail:

> The floor of this room was paved with round dark pebbles, beautifully clean. On the walls hung brilliant copper fans, glittering against the whitewash. And under the long, horizontal window that looked on the street was a stone slab with sockets for little charcoal fires. The curve of the chimney arch was wide and shallow, the curve above the window was still wider, and of a similar delicate shallowness, the white roof rose delicately vaulted (*S.S.* p. 132).

It is in passages like this that Lawrence, the artist, really appears. His concern with the right word or phrase, the simplicity of the language and the attention to detail reveal him not as a traveller and documenter like Stark, but as a *writer*. His fundamental concern and predominant way of seeing is not as a traveller or explorer or documenter, but as an artist.

Lawrence Durrell is very similar to D.H. Lawrence in this respect. His main preoccupation in his travel books is language and history, rather than discovery or exploration. Like D.H. Lawrence, Durrell produced a number of travel books based on the Mediterranean: *Prospero's Cell, Reflections on a Marine Venus* and *Bitter Lemons of Corfu*[10]. These three texts reflect his concern with language and literature, and it is the first of these books which is to be discussed here.

Durrell moved to Corfu with his wife Nancy in 1935, and the rest of his family followed shortly afterwards. Durrell spent the remainder of his life living in and around the Mediterranean, mainly on the Greek Islands but also in Egypt, Yugoslavia and France. While the books he wrote about his life in this region are not strictly travel books in that they do not chart a specific journey, they can be defined as books of place, and Durrell himself certainly fits the mould of the English writer and traveller of this period.

Durrell, who was born in India but educated in England, also appears to have been seeking a kind of utopia, an island sanctuary far from England. In contrast to D.H. Lawrence, however, he readily establishes and explores the historical connections with his own European heritage. Durrell's reasons for choosing the island of Corfu are perhaps more complex than Lawrence's reasons for going to Sardinia, and have to do with family and

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[10] Lawrence Durrell, *Bitter Lemons* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), *Prospero's Cell* (London: Faber and Faber, 1945), *Reflections on a Marine Venus* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960). Hereafter abbreviated as *B.L.*, *P.C.* and *R.M.V.*

finances. Once on Corfu, Durrell's appreciation of its island nature increases, and this is a reflection of his gradual discovery of the history and landscape of Corfu.

Just as Lawrence found something idyllic in the climate and landscape of Italy, so Durrell saw in Greece a completely different ambience to the rest of Europe. For he and his wife Nancy, nude sunbathing on a secluded beach became de rigeur, and they welcomed the complete change in lifestyle such a climate brought. Durrell emphasises the distinctions he saw between Greece and the rest of Europe when he writes:

> Somewhere between Calabria and Corfu the blue really begins . . . . once you strike out from the flat and desolate Calabrian mainland towards the sea, you are aware of a change in the heart of things . . . . You are aware not so much of a landscape coming to meet you invisibly over those blue miles of water as of a climate (*P.C.* p. 11).

While Durrell is actively seeking a place other than England, just as Lawrence was, there is none of the didactic searching for an alternative consciousness - the unselfconsciousness that Lawrence sees in the Sardinians - nor is there a conscious escape from twentieth century perceptions or conditions. Durrell's text is permeated with an appreciation of the lifestyle and community of Corfu: 'of the wholeness of Corfiot life'. Durrell's idyllic representation of Corfu takes shape at the time when the rest of the European world was being plunged into madness and darkness prior to the Second World War. What Durrell finds in Greece is a contrast to the Britain he knew. In this European and Christian Greece of the 1930s is the England that could have been[11]. Thus, Durrell's search can be equated with Lawrence's - it is utopian in kind.

In *Prospero's Cell,* Durrell is above all concerned with landscape and its effect on the human psyche - *Prospero's Cell* is subtitled 'A guide to the landscape and manners of the island of Corfu'. In his search for the essential nature of the Corfiot landscape, Durrell comes to see the olive as fundamental: 'its pungent smell and the scorched herbage of its course are familiar characteristics of the landscape' (*P.C.* p. 96). In attempting to capture the essence of the Mediterranean region, Durrell draws on the olive again:

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[11] Cocker discusses this in his chapter 'Greece - The Dark Crystal', pp. 168-207.

> The whole Mediterranean - the sculptures, the palms, the gold beads, the bearded heroes, the wine, the ideas, the ships, the moonlight, the winged gorgons, the bronze men, the philosophers - all of it seems to rise in the sour, pungent taste of these black olives between the teeth. A taste older than meat, older than wine. A taste as old as cold water (*P.C.* p. 96).

The olive tree, for Durrell, becomes a symbol of the Mediterranean and of the quality of life that is lived there. The olive trees *are* the landscape:

> ... throughout the spring months, through the gales of March and the hard sunspots of April, the tireless women are out with their soft wicker hampers gathering the fruit as it falls. In the other islands the fruit is beaten from the tree and the tree itself pruned; but in Corcyra this has been, for hundreds of years, considered harmful. Prolix in its freedom therefore the olive takes strange shapes; sometimes it will swell and burst open, ramifying its shoots until a whole clump of trees seems to grow out of the breast of the parent; in some places . . . the trees grow tall and slender, with bodies not rough, but of a marvellous platinum-grey, and branches aerial and fine of attitude. In the northern crags again the olive crouches like a boxer; its roots undermine roads; its skin is rough and wormy; and its pitiful exhausted April flowering is like an appeal for mercy against the conspiracy of rock and heat (*P.C.* p. 94).

Durrell turns the olive into a universal symbol for Corfu and for the Greek Mediterranean; to his mind it is part of the Greek psyche.

To Durrell, place impinges upon human perceptions, creating a particular type of personality. In an article 'Women of the Mediterranean', Durrell develops this theory, asking 'Are they [Mediterranean women] any different from other women in other places, and if so, how?'[12] He then offers an answer:

> They are all children of this mysterious sea, occupying its landscapes in human forms which seem as unvaryingly eternal as the olive, the asphodel, the cypress, the laurel, and above all the sacred vine . . . . In this context, then, as a creature of a landscape one sees her very clearly. She is to be distinguished from other women by the violent coherence of

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[12] Lawrence Durrell, *Spirit of Place*, ed. Alan G. Thomas (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 369.

> a character which is composed of fierce extremes . . . . she is as various as the history of the Mediterranean itself.[13]

There is a kind of primitivism here that is similar to Lawrence's; the qualities Durrell sees in Mediterranean women are the result of a time and a place apart - a different consciousness. This article was written in 1961, after the publication of *The Alexandria Quartet* and after many years living in the Mediterranean region. Nevertheless, *Prospero's Cell* conveys a similar belief in the power of landscape and its seminal influence on national character. It is the landscape that dominates, and it is what creates Durrell's version of Corfu. In a sense, landscape becomes a character that influences the personalities of others. Like Lawrence, Durrell figures the land as human, bearing qualities of awareness and consciousness: 'Nowhere else has there ever been a landscape so aware of itself, conforming so marvellously to the dimensions of a human existence' (*P.C.* p. 133). Durrell describes Greece as an eye that watches, absorbs, refracts, reflects - 'Greece was not a country but a living eye' (*P.C.* p. 131) and some of his descriptions emphasise the living, breathing qualities of the land: 'Visited by the lowland summer mists the trembling landscape must still lie throughout the long afternoons growing and altering' (*P.C.* p. 133).

However, Durrell's humanising of the land is somewhat different to Lawrence's fictionalisation of it. Where Lawrence reads negative, Circean qualities into Mt. Etna, for example, seeing Etna as a potential destroyer of souls, Durrell's Corcyrean landscapes are powerful, but non-threatening. Durrell's Greece supports human existence and influences it; it is still the cradle of Western civilisation, the source of European culture and tradition, whereas Lawrence's landscapes have the potential to destroy - Lawrence sees the relationship between land and humanity as a struggle.

Durrell's experience of Corfu as a living landscape influences his writing enormously. The whole text is almost a series of 'paintings' made in the mind's eye. Durrell's friend, Count D, actually predicts this when he says that if Durrell were to write a book about Corfu it would be 'a portrait inexact in detail containing bright splinters of landscape, written out roughly, as if to get rid of something which was troubling the optic nerves' (*P.C.* p. 107). This is indeed what Durrell has produced; a portrait that focuses on landscape with painterly detail, as though any thoughts about

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[13] *Spirit of Place*, pp. 369-370.

Greece and Greek people emerge out of the resonances set up by the land. Durrell, in fact, sees the landscape with a visual artist's eye:

> We have chosen Corcya perhaps because it is an ante-room to Aegean Greece with its smoke-grey volcanic turtle-backs lying low against the ceiling of heaven. Corcyra is all Venetian blue and gold - and utterly spoilt by the sun. Its richness cloys and enervates. The southern valleys are painted out boldly in brushstrokes of yellow and red while the Judas trees punctuate the roads with their dusty purple explosions (*P.C.* p. 12).

There is a sensuousness to Durrell's descriptions that reveal distinct painterly qualities such as stroke, shape, colour, touch:

> Southward the land falls gently away to the white cape, luxuriant and steaming; every curve here is a caress, a nakedness to the delighted eyes, an endearment. Every prospect is contained in a frame of cypress and olives and brilliant roofs (*P.C.* p. 19).

This sensuousness is an aspect of Durrell's particular position in terms of observer and writer about Corfu. Because he has chosen to live on Corfu and does not simply live there through circumstance, Durrell has the traveller's eye for detail. In this sense, he is an outsider, an observer, and Corfu is the 'Other'. As discussed earlier, there were very specific reasons for Durrell's move to Corfu, but like Lawrence, these were influenced by his desire for something other than England. Being born and brought up in India possibly predisposed Durrell to a warmer climate and to cultural traits very different to English ones. Thus, his awareness of the differences between the landscape and climate of Corfu and the rest of Europe are made apparent on the very first page of the text: '[you are] aware of the horizon beginning to stain at the rim of the world: aware of islands coming out of the darkness to meet you' (*P.C.* p. 11).

Durrell spent four years living on Corfu, and *Prospero's Cell* covers this time period. He was not a complete outsider, nor does he *appear* to write from the perspective of an outsider. To a large extent, Durrell is a participant in the life he describes. Durrell is in the privileged position of having Greek companions, speaking the Greek language and developing a knowledge of Greek history, habits, customs, ways of thinking. Speaking Greek means that Durrell is not inhibited by a language barrier - he has access to all people, whether intimate acquaintances such as Theodore

Stephanides, Max Nimiec, Zarian and the Count D, or lesser known acquaintances like Father Nicholas, the local fishermen and the villagers.

Durrell writes not from a complete outsider's position like Lawrence, but as part of a community. Durrell uses the conversations of his friends as a means of developing his own ideas about the history of Corfu and the Greek mentality. Unlike Lawrence, who remains aloof from Sardinian people and who becomes the observer observed in his self-consciousness, Durrell is the observer submerged. Durrell bears none of the hallmarks of the English explorer/recorder/discoverer of places; he is a participant writing about that which moves him deeply. Notions of alterity in Durrell's case become almost redundant. Corfu to Durrell is a paradise, and the Greek people are not objects of ridicule or humour or even curiosity, for as Alan G. Thomas writes 'there were qualities in the character of the modern Greeks themselves which struck deep chords with his own nature'[14].

Durrell is therefore in an ambiguous position. He is an inhabitant, but not a villager; he speaks Greek, but he is an Englishman with an Englishman's education and sensibilities. Durrell brings to Corfu and his writing about it, his education and knowledge of Greek history, literature and its role in European civilisation. His position is a privileged one and this is made apparent in a story he relates about Anastasius the fisherman. Durrell is interested in collecting local stories, and his neighbour Anastasius comes to tell him about a story, *The Odyssey* he has just discovered in his child's school reader. Anastasius the Greek had known of Homer but he had never read *The Odyssey*. Durrell the Englishman has grown up with these stories and with an understanding of their influence on literature in general. Durrell is steeped in Greek literature as no Corfiot peasant possibly could be. He sees Greece as home to philosophy and Western culture, and while his meditations on the history of Corfu might be of interest to the Count, they would mean very little to the villagers. Durrell might appear to be the observer submerged, but there is an intellectual and literary elitism bubbling under the surface.

This elitism is manifested in a certain amount of idealisation of life on Corfu. While Durrell embraces Greek culture and character, celebrating

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[14] *Spirit of Place*, p. 27.

the wholeness of Greek life, there is very little comment on the poverty and hardship of life for the average Corfiot peasant. One chapter, 'Landscape with Olive Trees', is devoted to a description of the harvesting of olives on the Count's estate. Life there seems bucolic, the days being filled with leisurely walks in the grounds and feasts on the terrace; the real harvesting of the olives is left to the villagers and there is no real discussion of this. Perhaps this difference in perspective is seen most clearly in the last of Durrell's trilogy of the Greek Islands, *Bitter Lemons*, when Durrell reflects rather reproachfully on his treatment by the Cypriots whom he had previously deemed friends. Even though he understands their loyalty to country, he appears unable to see how privileged his life was there as an Englishman, at a time of great hardship and suffering for the local villagers.

Unlike Lawrence in *Sea and Sardinia*, Durrell embraces history, intellectual thought and European tradition. His text is dedicated to his four main friends and fellow thinkers on Corfu: Theodore Stephanides, a doctor; Zarian, a critic and writer; Count D, an aristocrat and philosopher and Max Nimiec, an intellectual. Durrell anchors Corfu in the past and in history in a way that D.H. Lawrence denies Sardinia. For Lawrence, Sardinia has no history other than the present which he sees as one unchanging continuation of the past. Lawrence makes no attempt to tell the stories of any present day Sardinians either; *Sea and Sardinia* is the story of Lawrence's own experience. Sardinia exists for him in the here and now, and this emphasises the sense of immediacy he establishes in the narrative, and the idea of journey, of going places. In contrast, Durrell's historicising of Corfu makes his travel narrative a far less personal or solipsistic account than Lawrence's, as well as adding to the sense of *Prospero's Cell* being one long meditation on place and its influence.

Durrell provides a whole chapter entitled 'History and Conjecture' where he develops his historical musings about Corfu. He and his fellow thinkers have been trying to discover the source of the name 'Corcyra'. Durrell is also interested in tracing the places on Corfu where events in *The Odyssey* may have occurred. Durrell sees *The Odyssey* as 'badly constructed and shapeless', but claims that the poem describes the modern Greek with 'delightful and poignant accuracy'. Durrell believes that archaeology is all very well, but that the past is better understood through interaction with the local modern Greeks:

> In this landscape observed objects still retain a kind of mythological form - so that though chronologically we are separated from Ulysses by hundreds of years in time, yet we dwell in his shadow (*P.C.* p. 59).

Durrell's form of history is one that embraces the present. It is rather like his way of viewing landscape - as something that is interconnected with human personality and characteristics, rather than remote and isolated.

Although his reflections on Corfiot life generally avoid any kind of documentation, Durrell does comment on local costume. He says, 'It is worth perhaps recording the traditional island costume, now seldom seen except at festivals and dances' (*P.C.* p. 18). He then lists each item of clothing rather than providing a description of an individual in costume. There is none of Lawrence's overwhelming rapture at the local mode of dress, nor is there a linking with a primitive, idealised lifestyle or consciousness. Indeed, Durrell comments on such idealisation later in the text, claiming that such European perceptions are unnecessary, even 'wrong':

> The fact that they [the Corfu peasants] dress oddly seems to drive city-bred writers into a frenzy of romantic admiration. But really the average Balkan peasant is quite commonplace, as venal, cunning or admirable as a provincial townsman (*P.C.* p. 36).

Durrell draws his own conclusions about Greek character, and throughout *Prospero's Cell* he continues to analyse it.

Each of the chapters cover different facets of Corfu, but they also help to define the Greek temperament a little more. In the chapter 'Ionian Profiles', for instance, Durrell combines descriptions of the changing landscape with portraits of the individuals he is gradually coming to know better. Thus, a short entry about the philosophical discussions Durrell, Nancy, Zarian and Theodore have been having at the 'Partridge', is followed by a much longer entry about Durrell's experiences fishing with Anastasius, his neighbour. This entry is a combination of explanation of the fishing process, descriptions of the sea and the night, and Durrell's personal meditations - and the mix somehow provides an insight into Greek life and habits:

> [Anastasius] removes his coat which smells of glue and wood shavings and bales some of the water out from under the floor-boards. Then we cast off and move slowly out into the darkness. The night is deep and clean-smelling and utterly silent. Far out under the Albanian hills glow

> the little flares of other carbide-fishers. Anastasius circles in the margin of rocks below the house and begins to talk quietly explaining his practice. Midges begin to fly into our faces and we draw down our sleeves to cover our arms. He rows standing up and turning his oars without breaking the surface - since it is into this spotless mirror that we must gaze, and the least motion of wind smears all vision (*P.C.* p. 38).

The spareness of this description and the simplicity of the language matches the activity, and there is the implied suggestion that this is a natural activity for men. Like Lawrence, Durrell sees a healthy and vigorous lifestyle in the Mediterranean. The rawness of life and the 'feltness' of experience appealing to his need for a stronger, more potent lifestyle than that found in England. Earlier on, Durrell describes the catching of an eel - the brutality and potential ugliness of the situation comes across strongly, emphasising again the nature of Greek life and character.

In the chapter 'Karaghiosis: The Laic Hero', Durrell describes a visiting puppet show which he and Nancy attend. It provides the opportunity for a detailed meditation upon national character, particularly that of the Greeks. Durrell says:

> [Karaghiosis is] the embodiment of Greek character . . . . National character, says Zarian, is based upon the creations of the theatre. Huxley has remarked somewhere that Englishmen did not know how the Englishman should behave like until Falstaff was created . . . . But what about the Greeks? Their national character is based on the idea of the impoverished and downtrodden little man getting the better of the world around him by sheer cunning. Add to this the salt of a self-deprecating humour and you have the immortal Greek. A man of impulse, full of boasts, impatient of slowness, quick of sympathy, and inventive as well as assimilative. A coward and a hero at the same time; a man torn between his natural and heroic genius and his hopeless power of ratiocination (*P.C.* pp. 47-48).

Like Lawrence, Durrell is fascinated by the temperament of the local people, but his discussion of their character is a result of close contact and knowledge. This is not one of Lawrence's throw-away lines about the 'macaroni' nature of Italians, nor is it one of Stark's belittling of a people with childlike comparisons. It is not a romanticisation of character, nor is it the superimposing of what he wants to see, blinding him to the actuality.

Durrell is able, then, to move beyond the intellectual discussions and idealisation, to something more accurate and penetrating.

Durrell's rendering of his life on Corfu also reveals this penetrating gaze. Every experience seems to have been subjected to a close examination in terms of meaning and influence, but at the same time, his is an artist's vision and his use of language when attempting to describe these moments reflects this. Thus, his description of a swim in the sea is suffused with an exquisite awareness of the resonances of the actual moment:

> . . .I feel the play of the Ionian, rising and falling about an inch upon the back of my neck. It is like the heartbeat of the world itself. It is no longer a region or an ambience where the conscious or subconscious mind can play its incessant games with itself; but penetrating to a lower level still, the sun numbs the source of ideas itself, and expands slowly into the physical body, spreading along the nerves and bones a gathering darkness, a weight, a power. . . . The scalp seems to put forth a drenched thatch of seaweed to mingle with the weeds rising and falling around one's body. One is entangled and suffocated by this sense of physical merging into the elements around one. Blinded by this black sunlight, nothing remains of the known world, save the small sharp toothless kisses of fish on the hanging body . . . One could die like this and wonder if it was death (*P.C.* p. 100).

This description is permeated with a poet's sense of balance and sound; there is a musical quality to Durrell's writing as well as spareness and clarity. He appears to be constantly concerned with capturing the essence of a moment; the very *feel* of it:

> In the spaces of the wind the ear picks up the dry morse-like communication of the cicadas high above on the cliffs; while higher still in space sounds the sour brassy note of a woman's voice singing. N. caught in one of those fine unconscious attitudes sits at the prow, head thrown back, lips parted, long fair hair blown back over the ears - the doe's pointed ears. Drinking the wind like some imagined figurehead on a prehistoric prow one cannot tell from the sad expression of the clear face whether she hears the singing or not. Or whether indeed the singing is not in one's own mind, riding clear and high above the white sails to where the eagles, broken like morsels of rock, fall and recover and fall again down the invisible stairways of the blue (*P.C.* p. 62).

Durrell must be seen as an artist, concerned with capturing in language the nature of life and experience. Consequently, his travel books seek to define the very essence of that place. However, while Durrell's fundamental concern in *Prospero's Cell* is the essence of Corfu, and he draws on all his skills as a thinker and writer to reveal this, he doesn't imagine that his words can capture this island accurately or completely. Like D.H. Lawrence, Durrell was fully aware of the subjectivity of personal experience, as well as the inadequacies of language as a medium of communication. His text is presented as a series of journal entries that correspond to the changing seasons, but although roughly chronological, they leap back and forth in particular sections as if in recognition of the leaping nature of thought and the circular nature of experience and time. Durrell's attempts to capture the nature of Corfiot life are punctuated with comments such as, 'Walking in those valleys you knew with complete certainty that the traveller in this land could not record. It was rather as if he himself were recorded' (*P.C.* p. 131) and 'How little of this can ever be caught in words' (*P.C.* p. 62). Unlike Stark, Durrell's realisation is that his re-tellings can never capture the moment exactly, not for him or for the others who experienced the moments with him. As Durrell asks at the end of *Prospero's Cell*, 'But can all these hastily written pages ever recreate more than a fraction of it?' (*P.C.* p. 133).

As travel writers, D.H. Lawrence and Lawrence Durrell can be seen to be moving in quite different directions from Freya Stark and Vita Sackville-West. The reasons for their journeys result in a very different focus and way of seeing both England and the places visited. As observers in a new place neither of them seek to record accurately for a 'Public' at home. There is none of the imperialistic action of Stark nor the appropriating gaze of Sackville-West in either *Sea and Sardinia* or *Prospero's Cell*, but both texts reveal a tension between the desire to belong and the English background and education of these two male authors. Although D.H. Lawrence reveals his Englishness to the end, neither author sees England as the centre; England does not provide them with guiding principles or politics as it does for Stark and Sackville-West. However, *Sea and Sardinia* and *Prospero's Cell* differ dramatically from the previous two texts discussed in that their authors do not see themselves as explorers or documenters, but as artists.

CHAPTER THREE

IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE: JOURNEYS OF THE HEART

Peter Matthiessen and Robyn Davidson

> I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience . . .
>
> Henry Thoreau, *Walden*

The subjective and experiential nature of D.H Lawrence's and Lawrence Durrell's travel writing is developed in different directions in the works of travellers later in the century. The 1970s travelogues of Peter Matthiessen and Robyn Davidson, for example, are highly personal and confessional in style, and reflect a deep concern with environmentalism and the seeking of spiritual alternatives so prevalent in this era. The focus of their travel narratives is not the detailed documentation of journeys that are physically demanding, nor the discovery of a personal utopia, but some form of spiritual fulfilment.

Matthiessen has travelled to many regions of the world, taking part in expeditions to Papua New Guinea, Africa, Alaska, Asia, South America and Nepal. In some cases, because of the remoteness of the destination, his travels have taken the form of exploration. Matthiessen is a prolific writer - his journeys have produced twelve volumes of non-fiction and he has also written seven works of fiction, including novels and short stories. Matthiessen can be seen as a kind of composite figure of the authors discussed previously, in terms of his way of perceiving the world: he combines the fundamental qualities of explorer, like Stark, with that of artist like D.H. Lawrence and Lawrence Durrell. Matthiessen's role as a naturalist on many of these expeditions also profoundly affects the way he observes, as well as the type of discourse he establishes in his texts.

Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* (1979)[1] charts a long and demanding journey into an extreme environment - the mountainous and remote region of north-west Nepal. This journey was very arduous in physical terms - longer and more challenging than any of those discussed earlier. It covered over 300 miles and there were potential dangers from exposure, altitude sickness, physical exhaustion and banditry. The area Matthiessen travelled to is rarely visited by Europeans. Like Stark's journey in Persia in 1930-1932, this journey required careful planning and preparation. Throughout his journey, Matthiessen and his companion, the zoologist George Schaller, had to be completely self-reliant being miles from 'civilisation' and any form of aid. They were, however, accompanied by sherpas and porters, notably Tukten, Phsu Tsering, Dawa and Gyaltsen. The purpose of the expedition was to further Schaller's research into the Himalayan blue sheep or bharal.

The nature of this journey can be described as an expedition and as a form of exploration, and because of this, the written record of the journey is essentially an exploration document. This is not a book of place such as Durrell's, nor is it a book about a short journey around a relatively 'known' Mediterranean island such as Lawrence's. However, while the nature of the physical travels bears similarity to Stark's journeys in Persia, this narrative is very different in terms of its perspective and way of telling - *The Snow Leopard* is a radically different type of travel book from Stark's *The Valleys of the Assassins.*

For Matthiessen, the physical journey is simply a vehicle for a personal journey of enormous spiritual significance. This journey is a healing process rather than the means to a particular end; the landscape of *The Snow Leopard* is not a physical area, rather it is a region of the mind. Matthiessen's account is an intensely personal one, and his written exploration is not so much of the landscape and people, but of the self. As Matthiessen says at the beginning of his text, to 'go step by step across the greatest range on earth to somewhere called the Crystal Mountain, was a true pilgrimage, a journey of the heart' (*S.L.* p. 13).

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[1] Peter Matthiessen, *The Snow Leopard* (1979; London: Collin Harvill, 1989). Hereafter abbreviated to *S.L.*

The whole of Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* could be said to be written in the tradition of the Romantic sublime. Matthiessen's preoccupation is the meaning of life and his search is for revelation. In the 1700s, Romanticism developed from man's increasing awareness of the fleeting nature of human life, and it emphasised the 'role of the individual soul and intimate revelation'[2]. According to Northrop Frye,

> The sublime emphasised a sense of mystery and vagueness . . . coming through uncultivated nature, and addressing the individual or solitary man rather than the community . . . locating the sublime in mountains, oceans and wildernesses where a solitary traveller confronts it . . .[3]

The three page prologue that begins *The Snow Leopard* acts as an introduction to the ostensible reasons for the journey as well as to Matthiessen's interests and his past. We learn that he has known George Schaller before in Serengeti National Park, that Matthiessen is a student of Zen Buddhism and that his wife has died one year previously of cancer. Already, this text moves beyond the bounds of exploration document for it is encompassing myth, autobiography, confession, philosophy. The prologue hints at the autobiographical nature of the rest of the text, where the author describes the landscape and people in passing, but focuses on the effect the journey has on Matthiessen, making constant connections between the present and a personal past.

Matthiessen's journey is first and foremost a quest. Like D.H. Lawrence and Lawrence Durrell he is searching for something, but unlike their physical and social utopias he seeks some kind of spiritual sustenance outside a literal and physical realm. The nature of this text as a quest narrative is made explicit in the type of journey undertaken. Matthiessen chooses to climb into the mountains, a realm of ice and snow that is removed from the ordinary sphere of human life. It is high up, heady; the traditional arena of the romantic hero. Mountains (as Matthiessen himself later argues) are a world apart, a place of ice and snow where people rarely venture. This is the realm of the snow leopard, a magical and rarely glimpsed creature. On the opening page of his text, Matthiessen comments:

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[2] Lilian R. Furst, *Romanticism*, gen. ed. John D. Jump (1969; London: Methuen, 1973), p. 27.
[3] Northrop Frye, *A Study of English Romanticism* (London: Random House, 1968), p. 28.

> . . . where Bharal were numerous, there was bound to appear that rarest and most beautiful of the great cats, the snow leopard . . . the hope of glimpsing this near-mythic beast in the snow mountains was reason enough for the entire journey (*S.L.* p. 13).

Matthiessen's reference to myth here is important: a myth is a story that explains beginnings and meanings, with the emphasis on the unseen. Throughout the text there are allusions to a 'mythic view' and the snow leopard is described as having 'a short-faced heraldic head, like a leopard of myth'. It is 'the most mysterious of the great cats'. The snow leopard is an elusive, rarely glimpsed, little-known creature that ranks highly on the scale of nobility in the animal world. Even though it is real and exists, it becomes a creature of the imagination, and it almost requires a suspension of disbelief, such as children are capable of, to believe in it. Thus, this creature comes to represent Matthiessen's own search for spiritual enlightenment:

> Why was I going? What did I hope to find? . . . to say I was making a pilgrimage seemed fatuous and vague . . . How could I say that I wished to penetrate the secrets of the mountains in search of something still unknown . . . that might well be missed for the very fact of searching (*S.L.* p. 122).

Matthiessen, whilst glimpsing paw marks and evidence of the snow leopard's passing, does not actually see this creature: in chapter three, Matthiessen and Schaller are eager to catch sight of this animal, but by the end of the text, Matthiessen claims he is happy not to see it, content in the knowledge that 'somewhere on this mountain the leopard listens' (*S.L.* p. 222). The leopard becomes 'a strong presence' and it is not the sight of it that is important any more, rather, the knowledge of it. The myth almost becomes more important than reality. The search for the snow leopard is the search for elusive meaning.

Throughout *The Snow Leopard,* Matthiessen builds on the notion of myth, creating the sense that spiritual attainment is bound up in the myths of beginning. Matthiessen comes to see the mountains he travels in as a kind of spiritual home, as though in a past life he was of these mountains, but he tries to explain this away, thinking he must be wrong:

> Doubtless I have "home" confused with childhood, Shey with its flags and beasts and snowy fastnesses with some Dark Ages place of forgotten fairy tales, where the atmosphere of myth made life heroic (*S.L.* p. 234).

The explanation is interesting. A connection is made between childhood (with its belief in fairy tale, goodness, and mythical beasts), Shey (where Matthiessen has learned to live in the present, free from outside encumbrances, where snow and mountains abound and where mythical beasts such as the snow leopard do exist) and the whole state of transcendence that Matthiessen has been seeking. All these three are wrapped together in the discourse of adventure and romance. It is this innocence of childhood, the acceptance, the ability to listen to the universe and be part of it, rather than separate from it, that Matthiessen finally experiences:

> There is no hope anywhere but in this moment, in the Karmic terms laid down by one in one's own life. This very day is an aspect of Nirvana . . . the transformation of dark mud into the pure white lotus (*S.L.* p. 273).

Matthiessen's reminiscing throughout *The Snow Leopard* becomes a 'nostalgia, not for home, but for lost innocence'(p. 127). What Matthiessen seeks is a child's ability to be lost in the moment; a child's ignorance of time - the paradise of the present which children and Buddhists strive for. Ironically, Matthiessen's text is supremely self-conscious and self-reflexive. He asks himself, 'and who is listening? Who is this ever present "I" that is not me?' It is only at the end of *The Snow Leopard*, when his journey is almost over, that Matthiessen is able to experience this truth for himself:

> Already the not-looking-forward . . . takes on a subtle attraction as if I had glimpsed the secret of these mountains . . . With the past evaporated, the future pointless and all expectation worn away, I begin to experience that *now* that is spoken of by the great teachers (*S.L.* p. 273).

On the subject of mythic creatures, Matthiessen raises the question of the yeti, the existence of which has seen so much conjecture and speculation. He cites zoologist Schaller's belief in the existence of this creature and adds his own support. Matthiessen claims that there is more reason for belief in the yeti than for disbelief:

> In the half century since big, upright creatures, leaving hundreds of tracks, were seen in a high snowfield on the north side of Mount Everest by a band of British mountaineers, the *ye-teh*, or yeti, has met with a storm of disapproval from upset scientists around the world. But as with the sasquatch of the vast rain forests of the Pacific North-West,

> the case *against* the existence of the yeti - entirely speculative and necessarily based on assumptions of foolishness or mendacity in many observers of good reputation - is even less "scientific" than the evidence that it exists (*S.L.* p. 119).

Matthiessen suggests that there is an unnecessary opposition between science and the imagination in the twentieth century world. It is an opposition that he does not share, indeed, the style and concerns of The *Snow Leopard* transcend such a division. Matthiessen actually glimpses a creature that he assumes must be the yeti as he makes his way towards Crystal Mountain. There is no other animal that fits the reddish, hairy appearance, the height and the furtiveness. The yeti and the snow leopard form a curious partnership in Matthiessen's quest - the yeti, commonly believed to be a figment of the imagination is glimpsed and the snow leopard, known to exist, remains elusive. It provides an apt comment on Matthiessen's concern with illusion and reality - early on in the text he says, ' . . . though I know I am awake, that I actually see a bird, the blue flowers and green woodpecker have no more reality, or less, than the yellow throated marten of my dream' (*S.L.* p. 92).

The personal voice here, and the concern with issues such as illusion and reality are a far-cry from Stark. Matthiessen's subjectivity bears resemblance to Lawrence, but where Lawrence scrutinises and analyses the personality and characteristics of others, Matthiessen's focus is himself. The whole of *The Snow Leopard* is permeated by a preoccupation with self as well as philosophical musings about the nature of life, death and reality, characteristic of twentieth century movements such as modernism and existentialism. Matthiessen's concern with self is fundamental to *The Snow Leopard*, but ironically, this is made apparent through a narrative device characteristic of much earlier and more objective exploration writing, the journal. This journal form of the travel book is, according to Percy Adams, the archetype of the *recit de voyage.*

The Snow Leopard is set out as a journal with entries over the consecutive days of the two month journey. Matthiessen, it appears, wrote his journal as the journey took place. The main section of *The Snow Leopard* is written in the present tense, a form of immediate reflection with very little direct speech. However, Matthiessen's text contains many references to Buddhism and other texts, so that revisions must have been made on his return (in fact the book was not published until 1978 whereas

the journey took place in 1973). The opening entries are confessional and subjective, much as you would find in a personal journal. This personal and reflective journal emphasises the cerebral and spiritual aspects of Matthiessen's journey. In this respect, the journal stands very close to memoir or autobiography.

Philippe Lejeune defines autobiography as 'a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality', and claims that his definition,

> involves elements from four different categories :
>
> 1. Linguistic form: (a) narrative; (b) prose.
>
> 2. Subject treated: individual life, personal history.
>
> 3. Situation of the author: author (whose name designates a real person) and narrator are identical.
>
> 4. Position of the narrator: (a) narrator and protagonist are identical; (b) narration is retrospectively oriented.[4]

Matthiessen's text fits both the elements and definition that Lejeune provides, and it also corresponds to Gail B. Griffin's suggestion that 'autobiography [contains] a delicate balance between inner and outer, the self and world'; that 'autobiography is the celebration of the distinct self'. Later, Griffin mentions one of Virginia Woolf's criticisms of many memoirs or autobiographies: 'They leave out the person to whom things happened'[5]. Matthiessen and Davidson as we shall see, go to great lengths to include 'the person to whom things happened', to the degree that they could be accused of self-indulgence. The heavily autobiographical nature of *The Snow Leopard* is apparent through its emphasis on the personal and subjective rather than the external or objective. Matthiessen makes many references to the recent death of his wife, and his musings on how his youngest child is coping at home without either parent, as well as his own feelings as the journey takes place. His focus is the intimate, 'a kind of personal, subjective truth'[6]; 'the celebration of [his] distinct self'. Matthiessen the writer becomes the split subject/author/editor/philosopher.

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[4] Philippe Lejeune, 'The Autobiographical Contract', *French Literary Theory Today*, ed. T. Todorov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 106-107.

[5] Gail B. Griffin, 'Braving the Mirror: Virginia Woolf as Autobiographer', *Biography* Vol.4, No. 2 1981.

[6] Lynd Forguson, 'Autobiography as History', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2 1979/80, p. 153.

As the journey takes place, Matthiessen describes it - the walking, the exhaustion, the load sharing, the problems with porters, the landscape - but physical hardship never overwhelms the significance of past events and apprehension about the present and future. In the prologue, for example, Matthiessen describes the four-wheel drive journey from Kathmandu to Pokhara, but the emphasis falls on Matthiessen's own sense of unease rather than on the physical surroundings themselves:

> The road winds through steep gorges of the Trisculi River . . . dirty by thunderous rockslides down the walls of the ravine . . . . In raining mountains, a group of shrouded figures passed, bearing a corpse, and the sight aroused a dim restless, foreboding (*S.L.* p. 15).

The meeting with death on the path through life in such 'shrouded' conditions is a recurrent Romantic motif. Matthiessen creates the drama of Romantic extremes of landscape here, using the resonances of the environment to symbolise his own personal conflicts and needs: the description of this passage culminates in the last sentence with its focus on death and the self. Matthiessen's description of an ancient Hindu borne on a litter to Varanasi reveals similar preoccupations:

> The old man has been ravened from within. That blind and greedy stare of his, that caved-in look, and the mouth working, reveal who now inhabits him, who now stares out.
>
> I nod to Death in passing, aware of the sound of my own feet upon the path. The ancient is lost in a shadow world, and gives no sign (*S.L.* p. 23).

The ultimate point of this description is not sympathy for the old man, but a preoccupation with death and an awareness of Matthiessen's own mortality. Matthiessen's text is anchored in the Romantic tradition, with its emphasis on disease and death. *The Snow Leopard* is a book about having to come to terms with death and its fundamental concern is the meaning of life.

This focus on death shows Matthiessen to be writing, consciously or otherwise, in a long and recognisable tradition of late nineteenth and twentieth century American fiction, as epitomised in the works of Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman and through to Saul Bellow. Matthiessen's turning away from the modern world, his absorption in nature and alternative philosophies and religions, his self-sufficiency and

his concern with feeling and intuition, also reflect the tradition of American Transcendentalism. Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* can be seen as part of the return to nature writing that become predominant in the 1970s, of which Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* and Barry Lopez's *Desert Notes and River Notes*[7] are representative. However, while Matthiessen seeks comfort in nature, his concern is not nature itself but its revivifying effect on the human psyche. Matthiessen is drawing on, and writing *within*, certain literary traditions, but at the same time is forging new trends in travel writing itself.

This concern with transcendental ideas results in the constant movement in Matthiessen's text between present experiences and meditations, and past events. Matthiessen links his immediate experiences with thoughts on philosophy, religion, home life, environmentalism, and makes constant connections between a moment on the journey and an event in his earlier life:

> With our Sherpa camp assistants, we packed tents and pots, and bargained for last-minute supplies in the Oriental rumpus of the Asan Bazaar, where in 1961 I had bought a small bronze Buddha, green with age. My wife and I were to become students of Zen Buddhism, and the green bronze Buddha from Kathmandu was the one I chose for a small altar in Deborah's room in the New York hospital where she died last year of cancer, in the winter (*S.L.* p. 15).

This excerpt comes from the prologue and is typical of the structure of the rest of the book. This frequent movement between past and present, between immediate experience and reflections on mortality and spirituality, conveys Matthiessen's ultimate reason for the journey. As he says in 'Westward',

> I think of the corpse in Gorkha Country, borne on thin shoulders in the mountain rain, the black clothes blowing; I see the ancient dying man outside Pokhara; I hear again my own wife's final breath. Such sights caused Sakyamuni to forsake Lumbini and go in search of the secret of existence that would free men from the pain of this sensory world, known as samsara (*S.L.* p. 31).

The reader is forced to consider whether or not Matthiessen himself is modelling himself on Sakyamuni, and is searching the Nepalese mountains

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[7] Annie Dillard, *A Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1988). Barry Lopez, *Desert Notes and River Notes* (1976 & 1979; London: Pan Books, 1990).

for just the same secret of existence. He does, in fact, make many references to the concept of pilgrimage and at times describes himself in this role: 'On the path, the shadow of my close-cropped head is monkish, and the thump of my stave resounds in the still mountains: I feel inspired by Milarepa as described by one of his disciples, walking "free as an unbridled lion in the snowy ranges" ' (*S.L.* p. 95).

Two pages earlier, Matthiessen speaks of using 'Tantric discipline to overcome ideas of "horror" '. He uses his own form of 'mild chod' to force himself 'to look over the precipice whenever I can manage it' (*S.L.* p. 92). In this instance, the precipice is a real one, but Matthiessen's suggestion is that Buddhist teaching can help us to master our fears, learning to overcome the things in life that prevent us from truly experiencing each moment as it is. As he says on the following page, 'When one pays great attention to the present, there is great pleasure in awareness of small things'. For all its seemingly random moments, Matthiessen's text is highly self-conscious and very didactic, but this didacticism is not so much about geography or place, as about philosophy.

As the journey unfolds, and they travel further into north-west Nepal and closer to the Tibetan plateau, some of the defences and worries that Matthiessen believes prevent him from attaining understanding begin to drop away. Matthiessen's descriptions of mountains and landscapes occur more frequently, but again, the descriptions are not there for documentation or for the reader's enlightenment, they are intended to act as stimulation for Matthiessen's self-discovery:

> Pine needles dance in a light breeze against the three white sister peaks to the north-west. I sit in silence, lost in the burning hum of mountain bees . . . In the clearness of this Himalayan air, mountains draw near, and in such splendour tears come quietly to my eyes and cool on my sunburned cheeks . . . My head has cleared in these weeks free of intrusions - mail, telephones, people and their needs - and I respond to things spontaneously, without defensive or self-conscious screens (*S.L.* p. 112).

Matthiessen has previously commented that 'The emptiness and silence of snow mountains quickly bring about the states of consciousness that occur in the mind-emptying of meditation' (*S.L.* p. 103). The mountains are the catalyst for Matthiessen's explorations of the self and the psyche. Ironically,

there is the ever-present paradox of Matthiessen's desire for silence and an empty mind being continually described in an address to the reader.

While Matthiessen's journey is an extremely physical one that involves hardship, long treks, and potential danger in a remote and extremely beautiful part of the world, notions of exploration in a colonial sense are not important to him; the journey is all about self-discovery and understanding:

> . . . soon all sounds, and all one sees and feels take on an imminence, and immanence, as if the Universe were coming to attention . . . a Universe that is not the same yet is not different from oneself . . . (*S.L.* p. 194).

Yet in his very mythologising of place and experience, Matthiessen achieves an unconscious appropriation. By using the Nepalese landscape and the journey as a metaphor for his own search, Matthiessen casts an appropriative gaze rather than undertaking an imperialist action. However, unlike Stark, who believes that she can capture reality for her readers, Matthiessen questions the very nature of reality and appearance. It is as though he is hovering in a hazy world - one that interweaves with the dream world of sleep. In his desire to let go of material things and to experience the moment for what it is, Matthiessen begins to apprehend the secret he has been searching for: 'I have not quite apprehended this idea - that man's world, man's dreams are both dream states . . .' (*S.L.* p. 92). He says, 'I touch my skin to see if I am real . . . and do not answer' (*S.L.* p. 130), and later comments:

> . . . in the tension between light and dark is the power of the universe. This stillness to which all return, this is reality, and soul and sanity have no more meaning here than a gust of snow . . . . Yet as long as I remain an "I" who is conscious of the void and stands apart from it, there will remain a snow mist on the mirror (*S.L.* p. 162).

Matthiessen is concerned with consciousness, with the 'I' that separates itself from complete involvement in, or with, anything. In these high mountains, he discovers a sense of homecoming, of belonging. Matthiessen draws back from complete assimilation, however, aware of something that has impeded him in his 'journey' all along:

> . . . in this forlorn place, here at the edge of things, the stony bread, the dung and painted moon . . . seem as illusory as sanity itself . . . . To swallow the torrent, sun and wind, to fill one's breath with the

> plenitude of being . . . and yet . . . I draw back from that sound, which seems to echo the dread rumble of the universe (*S.L.* p. 204).

At other times he is able to celebrate this union: 'I grow into these mountains like moss. I am bewitched' (*S.L.* p. 212), and 'To glimpse one's own true nature is a kind of homegoing, to a place East of the Sun, West of the Moon' (*S.L.* p. 213).

As a naturalist, Matthiessen is concerned with the animal and plant life of the world. It was in this capacity as naturalist that he met George Schaller. Notions of environmentalism are evident throughout *The Snow Leopard*. Matthiessen comments on the disturbingly fast disappearance of tree life, the increasing erosion, the loss of top soil that occurs throughout Nepal. In their lonely journey, he and GS are always pleased to see native villagers, but Matthiessen voices concern occasionally at the movement of agriculture into higher and higher areas and the consequent degradation of land and animal life:

> One day this boy will destroy that forest, and their sheep fields will erode in rain, and the thin soil will wash away into the torrents, clogging the river channels farther down so that monsoon floods will spread across the land. With its rapidly increasing population, primitive agriculture, and steep terrain, Nepal has the most serious erosion problem of any country in the world, and the problem worsens as more forests disappear in the scouring of the land for food and fuel (*S.L.* p. 31).

Matthiessen seems to have an objective, fatalistic approach to this future and present disaster. His interest in the Yeti also reflects his wistful concern for the environment and man's relationship to it. The unvoiced question is, why should there not be creatures and habitats still 'scientifically' unknown in this twentieth century, rapidly shrinking world. This regret is echoed in his comments on the inevitable change in culture and lifestyle of the villagers of the remote regions of Nepal and the Tibetan plateau. He anticipates that, because of the hostile environment, villagers will eventually seek a different lifestyle elsewhere: 'The landscape is mysterious . . . . One day human beings will despair . . . and the last of an old Tibetan culture will blow away among the stones and ruins' (*S.L.* p. 249). Elsewhere, Matthiessen comments on the dying out of religion which is occurring everywhere: 'For this is the Kali Yuga, the Dark Age, when all the

great faiths of mankind are on the wane' (*S.L.* p. 278). This fear of loss is bound up in Matthiessen's search:

> Above is the glistening galaxy of childhood, now hidden in the Western world by air pollution and the glare of artificial light; for my children's children, the power, peace, and healing of the night will be obliterated (*S.L.* p. 117).

Matthiessen's concern is a form of Romantic pessimism and is related not just to the land, but extends to the animal population as well:

> Until quite recently these Nepal lowlands were broadleaf evergreen sal forest . . . the haunt of elephant and tiger and the great Indian Rhinoceros. Forest-cutting and poaching cleared them out . . . the saintly tread of elephants is gone . . . the tiger becomes legendary almost everywhere. Especially in India and Pakistan, the hoofed animals are rapidly disappearing due to destruction of habitat by subsistence agriculture, overcutting of the forests, overgrazing by the scraggy hordes of domestic animals (*S.L.* pp. 23-24).

This focus on the large, wild and exotic is a Romantic preference, as is Matthiessen's use of highly emotive and value-laden adjectives such as 'great' and 'saintly' which contrast with the adjective 'scraggy' to describe the domestic animals.

This awareness of environmental problems is evident throughout the text, but is not developed in a repetitive, didactic way. It is raised by Matthiessen's celebration of sightings or evidence of endemic animals - all mythic creatures - such as the lammergeier, the wolves, the bharal, the snow leopard's footprints and the moon panda. It is emphasised by the contrast between the quiet, beauty and solitude of the Land of Dolpo and the raucous busyness, the litter of the 'frontier towns' of Nepal:

> The fear crazed pony on the ice was a grim portent . . . the signs of approaching civilisation came thick and fast - the litter . . . ubiquitous police, dogs, human excrement, the hard blare of transistor radios (*S.L.* p. 282).

Matthiessen's environmentalism is not just a concern for nature but for the 'soul' of things - an awareness of the interconnectedness of all living things and of what man can learn from nature. It is a neo-Romantic concern with nature which here takes the familiar twentieth century form of environmentalism and ecology. However, Matthiessen's concern

becomes an emotive one because of the perspectives he chooses and the language he uses. The highly personal tone of his text means that any discussion moves dangerously close to sentimentality. Thus, when he speaks of 'saintly elephants' and 'grim portents' Matthiessen's credibility as a naturalist is open to question. He does not adopt the 'scientific' pretensions of Stark in her text, yet ironically, as a scientist, Matthiessen is far better qualified to do so. Perhaps this highlights Matthiessen's position as a guilt-ridden member of the late twentieth century, influenced by the emergence of existentialist thought and desperately searching for answers to the meaning of life.

Ultimately, Matthiessen's environmentalism is irrevocably linked to his own search. He recognises the essential freedom of wild animals and wild places - a state that Matthiessen himself seeks: 'the wolf finding [itself] at the centre of things has no need for any secret of true being' (*S.L.* p. 228). Matthiessen sees that animals live in the absolute present - an ability that he too seeks to attain throughout this journey. Thus, his is an environmentalism that admits the spiritual: 'I know this mountain because I am this mountain' (*S.L.* p.2 35). Matthiessen's concern for the environment stems from his position, not as a scientist/naturalist, but as a seeker of truths and as a student of Zen Buddhism. Matthiessen's interest in Buddhism ultimately informs and controls the direction of this narrative. Matthiessen's is a quest, as we have seen, with ostensibly physical outcomes - the bharal, the snow leopard, Crystal Mountain - but with predominantly spiritual aims. It is this spirituality which gives the text its substance, for Matthiessen is not really concerned with providing accurate pictures of people and place. He describes people in passing, as well as landscapes, but ultimately the purpose is to illuminate a personal state or truth. Tukten, one of the sherpas, is an example.

From the very beginning, Matthiessen expresses an interest in Tukten, finding him curiously familiar and seeking to know him better. Any happening that involves Tukten is related and examined. Towards the end of the text this occurs much more, matching Matthiessen's unfolding understanding of the nature of his quest and the truths/secrets he has sought. The following excerpt comes just after Matthiessen has begun to see the importance of living in the present moment:

> And perhaps this is what Tukten knows - that the journey to Dolpo, step by step and day by day, is the Jewel in the Heart of the Lotus, the Tao, the Way, the Path, but no more so than small events of days at home (*S.L.* p. 274).

Matthiessen believes that Tukten has known this all along, and it is the start of his recognition that Tukten is the 'teacher' he has been looking for. Tukten is described as a 'leopard-eyed saint', as elusive as the snow leopard, becoming 'the centre of each situation, so naturally does he belong where the moment finds him' (*S.L* p.276). Towards the very end of the narrative, Matthiessen comments,

> . . . there is a thread between us . . . there is something unfinished . . . I perceive [life] in the way that Tukten lives it . . . he is the teacher that I hoped to find . . . In the way he watched me, in the way he smiled he was awaiting me . . . Had I been ready, he might have led me far enough along the path "to see the snow leopard" (*S.L.* p. 287).

This passage emphasises the spiritual nature of Matthiessen's search, 'to see the snow leopard' being a metaphor for enlightenment, but it also highlights a certain irony - that all along, if only Matthiessen had known, he was in the company of a man who could show him the 'Way' he had been looking for. The text ends with Matthiessen pedalling to Bodhinath, an ancient shrine, where he hopes to meet Tukten one last time. But Tukten is not there and nobody knows of him - thus, the sense of loss that has permeated the text is emphasised once again. Matthiessen is left searching, with the teacher he thought he'd found, lost, just as a metaphorical sighting of the snow leopard was denied him. Perhaps, what Matthiessen has ultimately found at the end of his journey and his text, is that truth is an intangible thing, something one may search for, but rarely grasp.

Robyn Davidson's *Tracks* (1980)[8] is similar to Matthiessen's work in its directness, self-consciousness and confessional quality. This author makes obvious the importance of this journey to her as an individual - the reasons for it, the difficulties getting started, the changes it brought about and the outcomes. The epigraph that Davidson provides from Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* says much about the type of journey Davidson saw herself as undertaking:

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[8] Robyn Davidson, *Tracks* (1980; London: Jonathan Cape, 1992). Hereafter abbreviated to *T*.

> Anna knew she had to cross the desert. Over it, on the far side were mountains . . . The dream marked a change in Anna, in her knowledge of herself. In the desert she was alone, and there was no water . . . she woke knowing that if she was to cross the desert she must shed burdens (*T.* epigraph).

Two of the chapter titles relate directly to this quotation - to the process of sloughing off old skins and arriving at a new position - 'Shedding Burdens' and 'On the Far Side'. These are metaphors for personal change rather than physical distance travelled. Like Matthiessen's chapter titles, these point to a journey travelled away from and back to the self. At the end of Part One, Davidson speaks revealingly of the first day of her journey: 'It was done. I was on my own . . . The last burning bridge back to my old self collapsed. I was on my own' (*T.* p. 111).

Like Matthiessen's, Davidson's journey was extremely arduous and challenging. It took her from Alice Springs to the coast of Western Australia, across the Gibson Desert. It took six months and involved prospective dangers such as being kicked and deserted by her pack camels, visits from wild camels, getting lost, and lack of water. Like Matthiessen, Davidson travelled with the minimum of company; she had no sherpas or permanent travelling companion, just her three pack camels and a dog in tow, although she was met at stages of her journey by a National geographic photographer (Davidson goes to great lengths in an attempt to justify this in the context of her original aims), and at one point was accompanied by an Aboriginal elder.

Davidson does not begin her account at the very start of the journey, rather she provides many background details to the preliminary preparations, describing her arrival in Alice Springs and the phenomenal difficulties she encountered in attempting to obtain camels and learn how to handle them for the journey. In this way the reader learns about Davidson's past as well as her value and belief-systems. To Davidson, it is the decision to act, rather than the journey itself, that is the important thing:

> I had been sick of carrying around the self-indulgent negativity which was so much the malaise of my generation, my sex and my class . . . . One could really do anything one had decided to do . . . and the procedure, the process, was its own reward (*T.* p. 50).

Like Matthiessen's, Davidson's journey is a spiritual quest. There is a very strong sense of the personal here, of subconscious needs waiting to be answered, but she is not seeking the meaning of life, nor is this a book about death. Instead, it appears to be a form of psychological re-training, a kind of physical and mental work-out. One of the elements that becomes important in her journey, however, is the earlier death of her mother and her family's subsequent difficulties in dealing honestly with each other:

> We were bound together, since the death of my mother, by guilt and the overwhelming need to protect one another, mostly from ourselves . . . . We had managed to bury it successfully . . . now a certain awareness pleaded from behind blue eyes . . . A need to lay a ghost, I suppose, before it was too late . . . . We none of us wanted to make the same mistake twice, of leaving too much unsaid, of not at least trying to state the unstatable (*T.* p. 105).

Davidson's journey becomes a means of absolving this familial guilt: 'I could walk it [the guilt] away for all of us' (*T.* p. 106). Davidson is unable to see her journey in wholly personal terms. She undertakes the trip for herself, but it is inextricably linked with others' lives. This is very gendered behaviour - in contrast to Matthiessen who is concerned with only his feelings, Davidson is aware of herself in relation to others; she takes on the guilt of the group.

Despite these family concerns, Davidson's journey is primarily one of self-discovery:

> What I wanted to do . . . was to be alone, to test, to push, to unclog my brain of all its extraneous debris, not to be protected, to be stripped of all the social crutches, not to be hampered by any outside interference whatsoever . . . (*T.* p. 199).

Her journey is a test of her capabilities as a woman; a way of forcing herself to acquire characteristics of strength, courage and the ability to stand up to people. Early in the text when attempting to deal with Kurt the camel man, she says:

> I hated myself for my infernal cowardice in dealing with people. It is such a female syndrome, so much the weakness of animals who have always been prey (*T.* p. 30).

Davidson seeks to break free from what she sees as a female mould:

> Though this may sound like a negative quality [her defence and suspicion], it was essential for me to develop beyond the archetypal

> female creature who from birth had been trained to be sweet, pliable, forgiving, compassionate and door-mattish (*T.* p. 47).

While Davidson desires the acquisition of what she views as specifically non-female characteristics, her needs are not the same as Stark's. Davidson does not see the male gender as superior; indeed, many of her descriptions of the Australian male, particularly in Alice Springs, are scathing and derogatory. Instead, she views the female condition as an inherently wrong, enforced subordination to the male. This is the 'female syndrome' that she seeks to break free from. Her concern is with female stereotyping created by a conservative and patriarchal society, and her own need to escape from this. For instance, towards the end of her journey, Davidson comments on her own appearance and speaks revealingly about female attitudes to beauty:

> I probably looked like a senile old derelict in fact, with my over-large sandals, filthy baggy trousers, my torn shirt, my calloused [sic] hands and feet and my dirt-smeared face. I liked myself this way, it was such a relief to be free of disguises and prettiness and attractiveness. Above all that horrible, false, debilitating attractiveness that women hide behind (*T.* p. 195).

Later she says:

> Did it matter . . . if all the buttons had gone from my shirt and trousers? Would anyone notice or care? And what about menstrual blood? . . . . I am amazed at how quickly and absolutely this sense of the importance of social custom fell away from me . . . I hope that I will always see the obsession with social graces and female modesty for the perverted, crippling insanity it really is (*T.* p. 206).

This recognition of the expectations that are placed upon women with potentially destructive consequences, is related to Davidson's comments on the media hype created about her journey. She becomes the 'camel lady', the journey seen as all the more amazing because she is female rather than male:

> And that term 'Camel LADY'. Had I been a man, I'd be lucky to get a mention in the *Wiluna Times*, let alone international press coverage. Neither could I imagine them coining the phrase 'Camel gentleman'. 'Camel Lady' had that nice, patronizing belittling ring to it' (*T.* p. 232).

Here, perhaps, Davidson is like Stark in dismissing gender roles and fashioning her own. But in Stark's case, the masculine is the superior

gender and she is quick to assume this role, rather than stake a claim for women as equally capable.

The environment that Davidson journeys through is the desert and this is in absolute contrast to the environment of Matthiessen's journey. These choices of landscape may also be fundamentally linked to gender. Matthiessen seems to identify himself with the Romantic hero and chooses a suitably romantic region through which to journey. Snow mountains are remote, removed and seemingly untouchable, and they are traditionally the realm of the male mountaineer/explorer. The desert, however, is at the centre of things; it is a place of heat and touch; the heartland. It is almost as though Davidson has chosen the desert because she subconsciously sees it as a part of herself:

> Desert, purity, fire, air, hot wind, space, sun, desert, desert, desert . . . It had surprised me, I had no idea those symbols had been working so strongly within me (*T.* p. 40).

In vulgar Freudian terms, Matthiessen's mountains are tall and vertical, and therefore, male, whilst Davidson's desert is flat and horizontal and obviously female. Deserts and mountains, however, are important environments in both the Bible and other western myths - Moses on the mountain top, Nebuchadnezzar in the wilderness, Lancelot in the desert - the desert being a place of immersion and purification whilst the mountains provide wisdom and knowledge. Matthiessen and Davidson seem to be living out such myths in their journeys, as well as consciously/unconsciously fulfilling gender stereotypes: Davidson's journey is a seeking of purification whereas Matthiessen's is a seeking of enlightenment.

Another issue that appears to be gender related is Matthiessen's and Davidson's interactions with both animals and people. Davidson forms very close relationships with both Rick Smolen the photographer and Eddie the Aboriginal tracker: both people come to mean something to her in physical and/or emotional ways. Rather than seeking out a legendary animal like the snow leopard, Davidson takes animals as companions and as pack animals. She has a very strong relationship with her dog and is devastated when the dog succumbs to poisoned bait. In contrast, Matthiessen's relationships with both people and animals seem aloof, and

on a rather intellectual level. In his text, there is very little discussion of his relationship with George Schaller, and what is there, is an intellectualised response to the man rather than anything emotional. Gender issues are fundamental to the ways Davidson perceives the world and other people, as well as to the type of discourses she establishes in her text.

Nationality as well as gender plays an important role in these two narratives. Where Matthiessen is an American, a Westerner from a rich, developed nation travelling in a poverty stricken, under-developed Asian nation, Davidson is a female Australian in an overtly masculine domain. Both Matthiessen and Davidson share a similar reading of the frontier towns they depart from. Matthiessen's descriptions of Pokhara are negative and tinged with a sense of western guilt. His comments on Asia in general demonstrate this attitude:

> Confronted with the pain of Asia, one cannot look and cannot turn away. In India, human misery seems so pervasive that one takes in only stray details: a warped leg or a dead eye, a sick pariah dog eating withered grass, an ancient woman lifting her sari to move her shrunken bowels by the road (*S.L.* p. 22).

and Davidson's representation of Alice Springs is equally negative:

> My first impression as we strolled down the deserted street was of the architectural ugliness of the place, a discomforting contrast to the magnificence of the country which surrounded it. Dust covered everything from the large dominant corner pub to the tacky unimaginative shop fronts (*T.* p. 21).

A little later, Davidson says, 'It is a frontier town, characterised by an aggressive masculine ethic and severe racial tensions'(*T.* p. 23).

Matthiessen's views are characterised by a 'dominant culture' guilt, an awareness of his position as privileged outsider - almost a voyeur. For Davidson, it is the enormous disparities between the wealth and prospects of white and black Australians that create anger. Davidson, however, is a female struggling in an Australian arena of machismo, aware of, and disgusted by, the overt racism shown to Aborigines which seems to match the lack of power she experiences as a female. In Alice Springs, Davidson's position as a woman creates a vulnerability that is completely absent from Matthiessen's experience in Nepal For instance, Davidson is warned by a concerned local that the town louts are considering raping her because she

has been friendly in her job as a bar attendant. Her female gender and natural friendliness create this situation. Interestingly, this kind of behaviour is something that Stark never experienced in her travels - presumably the mantle of empire and patriarchy that she assumed enabled her to avoid such situations. Once Davidson sets out from Alice Springs on her journey, her gender does not appear to be an issue for the Aboriginal people that she meets. Her position and perspective alters, however, in that she becomes a European Australian travelling through Aboriginal land. In this situation, her views more closely approximate those of Matthiessen, as she becomes the privileged outsider. Davidson's text reveals a far greater desire to experience and understand this different culture than Matthiessen's. *Tracks* is permeated, then, with a female discourse of empathy, repression and struggle.

The maps on the opening pages of both Matthiessen's and Davidson's books emphasise the physicality of their journeys - the remoteness and the vast distances covered. However, these maps are very different in other respects. Matthiessen's maps suggest another aspect to his journey beyond the purely physical. In their hand-drawn lines and their mountainous aspect they conjure another world, a fairy tale land of the senses and the soul. The maps are reminiscent of authors such as Tolkein and Le Guin, of the fairy tale of the Enchanter and his daughter who lived in remote snow mountains. The names themselves emphasise this - the Land of Dolpo, Crystal Mountain. As Matthiessen comments later, 'the Land of Dolpo is not found in the geographies, and it seems mythical even to people like myself who like to imagine they have been here' (*S.L.* p. 181). In Western minds, this land is a realm of myth where time stands still: 'No aeroplane crosses such old mountains. We have strayed into another century' (for 'century' it would be appropriate to substitute realm or world). Matthiessen suggests that this land is an enchanted world, not just because of the culture and the sense of displacement, but because of the nature of the landscape and the potential meaning it contains (*S.L.* p. 183).

The map that Davidson provides of her journey is a much more literal one than Matthiessen's. The territory is obviously Australia, and there are no undulating, hand-drawn sand dunes as there are mountains in Matthiessen's map. Davidson's map stresses the enormity of her journey - the quantitative distance travelled (over three-quarters of the width of the

continent). The arduousness that the map suggests has a specific function in Davidson's text: throughout she speaks of developing courage, of learning to stand up for herself, of becoming more assertive and independent. The very distance Davidson covered, told by the strong plain lines of her map, emphasises the necessity of these characteristics. The differences in the maps highlights the gender differences discussed earlier: the hazy lines, the shading and shadows of Matthiessen's map provide a Romantic element to his text, whereas Davidson's clinically drawn map suggests the possibility of measuring her psychological gains in direct proportion to the physical distance covered.

While Stark, through her use of Orientalist images and discourse, conjures the exotic and romantic in her journey, Davidson is at pains to render the romance as an external, super-imposed element. In a sense, her text is a pragmatic account, where honesty and reflective objectivity are the aims. Davidson seeks to recount the journey in intimate detail, with all its frustration and conflict, both internal and external, attempting to expose the myth of the 'camel lady' created by an eager media, as well as the romantic notions that others perceive in her journey. She discusses the presence of Rick Smolen, a photographer, who accompanies her for part of the journey, and the conflict created by his expectations that contrast so radically with hers:

> He was caught up in the romance of the thing - the magic - a side-effect I had not expected, but one which I had seen in many people, even my close friends (*T.* p. 101).

But this romantic element that Davidson makes such efforts to dispute, is ironically, part of the western mythos associated with such environments and such journeys; despite the prosaic reasons Davidson cites for her journey she must have been aware of, and influenced by, such notions. In her text, Davidson rebels against the photographs Rick Smolen takes of her for *National Geographic*. She says of the camera that 'it captures the projections of whoever happens to be using it, never the truth' (*T.* p. 137) She asks Rick as he photographs her in 'exciting shots of the Rock', 'What about honest journalism?' The very fact that two of Rick Smolen's photographs grace the cover of the book suggests a kind of dishonesty here - the photographs ensure that the book is a marketing success yet Davidson derides them in the text itself.

Davidson discusses candidly her reactions to Smolen, who becomes a kind of travelling partner, just as Matthiessen comments on George Schaller. Both authors are honest about their differences with their companions and deem it important to include these matters. But while Matthiessen's analysis of George Schaller is on a removed and purely mental level, Davidson's involvement with Smolen is far more emotional. It stems from her resentment at his intrusion, at the different slant her journey takes with him along. She says:

> I was depressed, I felt cheated and put upon . . . I hated Rick and blamed him for everything. Besides, he didn't like the desert, couldn't see it . . . . He was like a fish out of water and he thought the countryside boring . . . . he would take photos using the magnificent earth as backdrop (*T.* p. 138).

Two things are important here - Davidson's awareness of the 'magnificent earth' as more than just backdrop, and the emotional honesty used in discussing her predicament. This confessional quality becomes apparent a few pages later. Davidson discusses how her relationship with Rick changes from Platonic to sexual: 'Ah yes. Silly me. Inevitable I suppose, but in retrospect one of the worst mistakes I made in terms of my freedom during the trip' (*T.* p. 142). Ironically, the very terms Davidson uses here to describe herself are the sorts she fights against in the beginning of the book. 'Silly me' conjures the helpless female, unable to take control of her life, succumbing to the ploys of the dominant male. Just as Matthiessen describes his wife's illness and death in intimate detail, Davidson feels compelled to include all the experiences associated with her journey. For Stark, such issues were just not part of the journey, or more importantly, of the telling of the journey. For Matthiessen and Davidson, however, such emotional issues are paramount; they are integrally bound up with the nature of the journey, and thus they profoundly influence the position from which each author views the world, and the discourses that ensue in the texts.

Davidson's descriptions of the landscape and people are not attempts to capture a culture which is completely 'Other' to her reading public's experience and perceptions as Stark attempts to do with her photos and descriptions of Persia. Davidson is not interested in such documentation. She does appear, however, to be concerned with education as some of her comments on Aboriginal people illustrate. In chapter three, Davidson

discusses the enormous problems that Aborigines face in terms of attaining education, health, self-respect and autonomy:

> Education was always a problem . . . . apart from having to take bricks wrapped in brown paper to school instead of lunches because there was no money and no means to make them . . . apart from having perforated eardrums and eye infections and sores and malnutrition, apart from having to deal with the inherent racism of many of the teachers . . . they might have to sit next to some kid who might be a traditional tribal enemy (*T.* p. 59).

Davidson's language is emotive here, but it is not a sentimentalising of a 'noble' race or people that she constructs. She seeks to jolt the reader into an awareness of the conditions Aboriginal people suffer; this is part of the guilt she feels as a relatively privileged yet passive member of the European Australian community. Davidson wants to spend time with Aboriginal people having an already healthy respect for their culture and beliefs. Yet hers is foremost an education of the self, an attempt to 'do something', assuage her own need, through an experience that banishes all the crutches, and perhaps perceptions, of her western upbringing. Other than write with sympathy about Aboriginal communities and individuals, Davidson does nothing to help these people. Ultimately, she is an observer concerned with her own agenda, and her discussion of Aboriginal people and culture simply helps to establish her text as politically correct at a time of increasing awareness of the plight of indigenous peoples.

The time Davidson spends with the Aboriginal elder, Eddie, helps to develop her understanding of Aboriginal people. She describes him as

> exuding all those qualities typical of old Aboriginal people - strength, warmth, self-possession, wit and a kind of rootedness, a substantiality that immediately commanded respect . . . he was healthy, integrated, whole (*T.* p. 161).

Davidson seems to fall into an idealised typecasting, yet the rootedness that Davidson so admires in Eddie seems to be at the heart of her search. Later, Davidson discusses the Aboriginal settlement of Pipalyatjara and the difficulties associated with establishing such a place. Her comments on western anthropology are in contrast to Stark's generation's way of seeing. Davidson's perspective is based on a desire to understand; hers is an empathetic view rather than a curiosity that seeks to establish difference:

> ...no amount of anthropological detail can begin to convey Aboriginal feeling for their land. It is everything - their law, their ethics, their reason for existence. Without that relationship they become ghosts. Half people. They are not separate from the land. When they lose it, they lose themselves, their spirit, their culture (*T.* p. 168).

It is this understanding, perhaps, of Aboriginal ways of viewing the land, that permeates Davidson's own descriptions of landscape, and helps to emphasise the difference between her renderings of the environment and Stark's.

Davidson's early descriptions of the landscape she travels through are moments of euphoria for the self:

> All around me was magnificence. Light, power, space and sun. And I was walking into it. I was going to let it make me or break me. A great weight lifted off my back. I felt like dancing and calling to the great spirit. Mountains pulled and pushed, wind roared down chasms .... (*T.* p. 107).

The words 'let it make me or break me' contain echoes of Romantic dualism. As with Matthiessen's descriptions of landscape, this excerpt does not really attempt to document a specific physical environment, rather it describes the changing emotions and perceptions of the protagonist as influenced by that environment. Davidson emphasises this when she comments, 'it is difficult to describe Australian desert ranges as their beauty is not just visual. They have an awesome grandeur that can fill you with exaltation or dread, and usually a combination of both' (*T.* p. 126). It is just this that Matthiessen experienced in the snow mountains of Nepal.

Davidson's first descriptions of the sandhills through which she journeys, emphasise this late twentieth century questioning of the writer's ability to capture reality:

> Then I saw my first sandhills. This country had had bushfires through it the previous season which had been followed by heavy rains, so the colours of the landscape were now brilliant orange, jet black and sickly bright lime, Day-glo green. Whoever heard of such a desert? (*T.* p. 130).

Similarly, her initial reactions to Ayers Rock question conventional images of this famous landmark:

> And then I saw the thing. I was thunderstruck. I could not believe the blue form was real. It floated and mesmerized and shimmered ... and

> looked too big. It was indescribable. I held my breath until I could see it again. The indecipherable power of that rock had my heart racing. I had not expected anything quite so weirdly, primevally beautiful (*T.* p. 134).

These reactions to landscape also emphasise the subjective nature of Davidson's journey. Her perceptions are not affected by concepts of colonisation, or of a fixed and single reality, as previous generations were, rather they are the result of personal values influenced by late twentieth century concerns of feminism, conservation, the role of nature in our lives, and that fundamental question of how life should be lived.

As a result of this preoccupation with the self and with ways of living, notions of time, space and reality become very important in Davidson's text. Davidson comments, 'not only was space an ungraspable concept, but my description of time needed re-assessment. I was treating the trip like a nine-to-five job' (*T.* p. 128). In a way, this last sentence sums up the difference between Davidson and Matthiessen's trips compared with Stark's. Where Stark's vision is one of order and discipline, of a definable, documentable physical reality that unfolds in a chronological time frame, Davidson and Matthiessen see the physical as undocumentable and highly subjective in terms of experience. Stark expects to travel over, to map, and to appropriate, but Davidson and Matthiessen seek to submerge themselves within an environment; theirs is a completely different understanding of land/place and of time and reality. Davidson's journey is one of self-appointed loss - a discarding of all Western values and constructions in order to realign herself, spiritually, mentally and emotionally. Davidson describes this experience as a struggle:

> I was being torn by two different time concepts. I knew which one made sense, but the other one was fighting hard for survival. Structure, regimentation, orderedness . . . . Eddie . . . was teaching me something about flow, about choosing the right moment for everything, about enjoying the present (*T.* p. 173).

This is similar to Matthiessen's learning to live in the absolute present in Nepal - a Buddhist principle which seems similar to Aboriginal perceptions of life. For both Matthiessen and Davidson, time becomes something other than a daily regimen - it is immediate experience, the absolute moment, instead. As Davidson says, 'Time melted - became meaningless' (*T.* p. 174), and she follows this with a discussion of the

minute attention to detail that comes with such a transcendence. Ultimately, for Davidson, the desert becomes the whole world as she travels through it, and her perceptions of reality are altered by this: 'The self in a desert becomes more and more like the desert . . . It becomes limitless' (*T.* p. 192). Thus, Davidson's search has been rewarded: 'The heart of the world had been found . . . The heart of the world, paradise' (*T.* p. 215).

Like Matthiessen, however, Davidson recognises the illusory nature of such experiences. Just as Matthiessen's text ends with his frustrated search for Tukten and for truth, Davidson's concludes with the loss of the experience through time: 'I knew even then that, instead of remembering the truth of it, I would lapse into a useless nostalgia' (*T.* p. 247). In their seeking of truth and the meaning of life, both these authors/observers remain anchored in a late twentieth century perspective of search and loss. Their perspectives and observations, as well as the discourses they establish, are fundamentally different to those of Stark and of Lawrence and Durrell.

The self-assured and ostensibly objective Victorian voice of *The Valleys of the Assassins* has been replaced in *The Snow Leopard* and *Tracks* by the self-conscious, environmentally aware, pessimistic and slightly guilty voice of the late twentieth century. Both of these texts are confessional and self-indulgent, with the demanding physical journey seen as secondary to the spiritual search. Matthiessen and Davidson's journeys are essentially very similar; the differences are those of gender and country. Matthiessen and Davidson are acutely aware of issues of race, culture and appropriation. Matthiessen makes obvious his concern with the disparities between developed countries such as America, and developing countries like India and Nepal, just as Davidson seems appalled by the treatment of Aborigines in Australia. Matthiessen is burdened with a sense of Western guilt, aware of the poverty and hardship suffered by the native people of the areas through which he travels. Nowhere in Stark's text is there this conscience or sense of guilt. In contrast, Matthiessen's and Davidson's texts reveal the changing ideologies of Western, 1970s thought.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANTIPODEAN GOTHIC: THE FAR ENDS OF THE EARTH

Bruce Chatwin and Peter Conrad

Nothing will content them but the extremest limit of the land
Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

> . . . and so the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks, and his imperial beak thrust upwards, and his whole captive form folded in the flag of Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her, and helmeted herself with it.
>
> Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

The belief in the spiritually sustaining qualities of nature and landscape that marks many travel/nature texts of the 1970s and which culminates in the extreme environments of Matthiessen and Davidson's texts, finds a sharp reversal in Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* (1977) and Peter Conrad's *Down Home* (1988)[1]. The remoteness, wildness and isolation of the regions travelled to, are emphasised in these texts, but they are not seen as ennobling or enriching characteristics. Instead, the geography of these destinations is viewed as primitive and potentially threatening. While these writers undertake literal and physical journeys, their texts reveal many fictional qualities. The drawing on metaphor and intertextuality emphasises their conscious links with fiction. In the eyes of these two observers, Patagonia and Tasmania hover between the literal and the metaphorical, becoming fictional realms at the far ends of the earth.

Chatwin and Conrad's perceptions and representations of landscape are influenced not by the need to document faithfully, but by the multiple associations or resonances that the landscape sets up - the metaphoric

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[1] Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia* (1977; London: Pan Books, 1979). Peter Conrad, *Down Home* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988). Hereafter abbreviated to *I.P.* and *D.H.* respectively.

implications of place. The Patagonia and Tasmania that Chatwin and Conrad present are internalised landscapes, realms of memory and imagination. In these authors' eyes, Patagonia and Tasmania are places where story and myth-making dominate; where the fine line between fact and fiction blurs.

The literalness of these landscapes is easily established - both are recognised places recorded in explorer's journals and subsequently mapped and charted. Patagonia and Tasmania are not imaginary realms, yet they are places about which very little is known by people from the 'centres' of Western civilisation. As Conrad says:

> When I got to England, I found that people had only the vaguest notion of . . . Tasmania . . . In America I was sometimes assumed to be a native of Tanzania (*D.H.* p. 6).

However, neither Tasmania nor Patagonia is a country in its own right. They are both parts of continents - Patagonia is the name of the southern-most sections of Chile and Argentina and includes Tierra del Fuego, while Tasmania is just one of seven states or territories in Australia. Instead of actual nations, they are regions or realms (like Matthiessen's 'Land of Dolpo'), and this implies that they are part of some larger dimension, as well as suggesting links with myth-making and fiction.

The titles of Bruce Chatwin and Peter Conrad's texts offer insights into the nature of both journeys. Chatwin's title, *In Patagonia*, implies a place which is alien, geographically, culturally and spiritually, whilst Conrad's, *Down Home* is a colloquialism for the familiar and known. Ironically, as the texts reveal, Chatwin discovers that Patagonia is a place he recognises, a 'badlands' he is familiar with, whereas Conrad finds that spiritually he does not know Tasmania at all.

Like many travel books, the basic structure of *In Patagonia* is mythic in quality. It focuses on the author/narrator as main protagonist who is a quester, setting out from the familiar and known territory (in this case, England) for a remote and little-known land (Patagonia). The protagonist does battle with particular enemies or evils, or seeks his Grail (in Chatwin's case he searches out a host of strange characters, ventures into 'hostile'

country alone, explores the spirituality and practices of obscure Patagonian sects, and obtains a hairy fragment of the creature that prompted the journey). Like many mythic heroes before him, Chatwin survives his journey, achieves his goal (the talismanic mylodon skin) and attains a new level of wisdom and understanding in the process. Chatwin's wisdom, however, is not so much to do with growth of the self, like Matthiessen and Davidson, as with an objective exploration of the anti-spiritual. His journey is not into heaven but into hell; the experience is not inward to transcendence but in to the sinister core - a revisioning of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Patagonia is certainly 'Other' from a Western perspective in terms of location and history, but is also macabrely 'Other' in terms of the bestiality and immorality that Chatwin records.

In Patagonia is as much about how we can know the history of a place (or simply know a place and its 'reality') as it is about Patagonia. Chatwin's text is metafictional in nature. He tells the story of his journey through the stories of others, emphasising the multiple myths from which Patagonia has developed, historically, traditionally and personally, rather than any single historic 'truth'. To achieve this Chatwin plays with concepts of fact and fiction, forcing the reader to question conventional assumptions about the nature of history, literature and place. He also draws heavily on the texts that have been written about Patagonia both exploratory and literary[2]. The intertextual nature of *In Patagonia* and of Chatwin's own understanding of Patagonia is thus emphasised. This drawing on the myths and stories of Patagonia means that Chatwin's exploration is not only or primarily of the physical Patagonia, but of the discourses of Patagonia.

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[2] In *Patagonia Revisited* (1985; London: Jonathan Cape, 1993), both Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux discuss in great detail the various texts that have been written about Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. They posit interesting theories about the origins of the name Patagonia, with Chatwin suggesting an anonymously authored text, *Primaleon of Greece*, being the inspiration for both Magellan and Shakespeare (Magellan named the Indians 'Pataghoms'. and Pigafetta's account claims two captured Indians called on their devil, 'Setebos' to save them. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare names the devil Setebos also. There are other connections, namely references in the novel to the docile, dog-nature of the captured Patagon, the dog-faced masks the Indians were reported to wear and Shakespeare's references to Caliban as a 'puppy-headed monster'). See pages 30-40.

Ultimately, Chatwin's focus is language and writing, and the constructions of the 'real' that result.

Chatwin begins with a reference to his grandmother: 'In my grandmother's dining room there was a glass-fronted cabinet and in the cabinet a piece of skin' (*I.P.* p. 5). This piece of skin is only a fragment - a part of a much larger entity - and it becomes a talisman for Chatwin. A description of the creature the skin belongs to follows: 'this particular brontosaurus lived in Patagonia, a country in South America at the far end of the world'[3]. These opening sentences generate a sense of quest, myth and fairytale, as well as the possibilities of Patagonia. They provide many of the elements of a classic folk story or fairytale as articulated by Propp[4] in his studies of the structural qualities of such tales - the hero/protagonist, the archetypal grandmother-figure who exemplifies the safety and known realm of home, and a far-off, mythical land. Chatwin consciously develops these elements of myth and fairytale throughout the text. The focus moves away, however, from the hero or quester (Chatwin), to the far-off land - Chatwin is not concerned with the self or with autobiography in the way that Matthiessen and Davidson are, nor is he at pains to render himself as his story's central protagonist. In some ways, Chatwin seeks to explore the essence of the place, Patagonia, in the way that Durrell does Corfu, but Chatwin's Patagonia is a place which establishes the presence of human and subhuman evil.

Unlike the familiar and safe England Chatwin leaves, Patagonia proves to be a place where monsters and nightmares abound - sects with barbaric activities, revolution, bloodshed, exile and isolation: at times very similar to Dante's Inferno; this is a hellish, macabre place. Throughout the text, Chatwin dwells on scenes of oddity, describing scenes of killing in realistic and grotesque detail:

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[3] As Chatwin explains, the creature was not really a brontosaurus at all, but a mylodon (giant sloth).

[4] See Robert Scholes discussion of Propp in *Structuralism in Literature* (New Haven: Yale University, 1974).

> 'Then he slipped the knife point in where the skin stretches tight over the belly and the blood spurted over his hands. He enjoyed that' (*I.P.* p. 7)

and

> Dino's father had strung the carcass to an apple tree and his dog was eating the purple bunch of intestines in the grass. He took his knife to the neck and the head came away in his hand (*I.P.* pp. 14-15).

He speaks of the ways unionists are dealt with like animals:

> Justice depended on whether a sheep-farmer wanted a man back or not. It was just like sorting sheep .... The men in the yard heard the crackle of shots and saw the turkey buzzards coming ... About a hundred and twenty men died at La Anita (*I.P.* p. 100).

Then there are the nightmarish descriptions of the experiences of sailors, particularly the result of Captain Davis's pillage of a penguin colony:

> In them bred a 'loathsome worm' about an inch long. The worms ate everything, iron only excepted - clothes, bedding, books, hats, leather lashings and live human flesh. The more worms the men killed, the more they multiplied (*I.P.* p. 86).

Chatwin draws on the mode of the grotesque here. The genre of the grotesque emphasises 'the irrational, the unpredictable, the bizarre'[5], responding to the disordered and fragmentary nature of the modern condition. With such a focus, the grotesque forces a close and often painful look at human nature through the use of violent, aberrational images related to the body, yet it contains the potential for some kind of 'redemptive' process as well. According to William O'Connor:

> the grotesque, as a genre or a form of modern literature, simultaneously confronts the antipoetic and the ugly and presents them, when viewed out of the side of the eye, as the closest we can come to the sublime'[6].

Chatwin's use of the grotesque throughout *In Patagonia* is a way of exploring the human condition and the nature of twentieth century existence; through such descriptions of the bestial, Chatwin plumbs the possible depths of inhumanity as well as the resilience of the human spirit.

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[5] William Van O'Connor, *The Grotesque: An American Genre and Other Essays* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), p. 4.
[6] O'Connor, p. 19.

The juxtaposition of the beautiful and the ugly, the familiar and the alien that occurs throughout *In Patagonia* is emphasised in descriptions of the landscape. The bestial in man is parallelled by the nightmarish and hallucinatory qualities of the landscape which Chatwin sees as a reflection of human struggle. Chatwin uses grotesque images when describing the landscape. Thus, the text is dotted with phrases like,'I left the boneyard of La Plata', 'skull white cabbages grew in the garden' and 'the storm kicked up clouds of dust and flares from the oil rigs lit them a lurid orange'.

At times, Chatwin describes place in terms of its domestic habitation, but even here the emphasis is on the odd with unexpected comparisons and juxtapositions. There is a surreal aspect to some of these descriptions with everyday items being compared to vastly different objects:

> Old women, black specks along the wide street, scuttled for cover. I sheltered in a shop smelling of cats and the sea. The owner sat knitting socks of oiled wool. About her were strings of smoked mussels, cabbages, bricks of dried sea-lettuce and tresses of kelp, coiled up like the pipes of a tuba' (*I.P.* p. 167).

There are also moments in the text where the landscape is described with few such metaphorical associations:

> For the first few miles the forest came down to the shore and you looked down through branches at the dark green water and the purple streams of kelp rising up and wavering with the tide. Further on the hills drew back and there were pastures of springy grasses, dotted with daisies and mushrooms . . The rocks were floury white from guano. There were cormorants on them and kelp geese, flashing black and white as they took off. Offshore, there were grebes and steamer ducks and, out in the strait, sooty albatrosses, wheeling effortlessly, like knives' (*I.P.* p. 127).

Yet even here, where the main descriptive technique is the use of colour, Chatwin includes a significant image. 'Albatrosses wheeling effortlessly like knives', echoes the plentiful references to killing and disembowelling that are scattered throughout the text. In Chatwin's eyes, the Patagonian landscape is both a reflection of the human condition, and a source for it - the isolation of Patagonia forces a discarding of normal social convention, resulting in immoral practices, and these actions are, in turn, mirrored in

the remote and wild environment. Thus, factual descriptive accounts of the physical environment are rare. The landscape is never seen in purely literal terms - its metaphorical qualities, particularly associations with the macabre, dominate.

Chapter 52 has a threatening fairytale quality to it, (similar to the German fairy tales with their brutal outcomes which are supposed to act as warnings to naughty children), focusing on a Patagonian sect of male witches known as the 'Brujera'. Chatwin informs us that 'The sect of the Brujera exists for the purpose of hunting ordinary people' and the details he relates about them are grotesque and reminiscent of pagan rituals or devil worship. In the following extract Chatwin describes a kind of inverted Christianity:

> The candidate must submerge himself for forty days and forty nights under a waterfall of the Thraiguen River to wash off his Christian baptism . . . Next he must catch the blood of his own veins (*I.P.* p. 103).

The sect has a crystal stone which is invested with enormous powers of prophecy. Once again, according to Propp, this is a traditional element of fairy tale or myth - inanimate objects having talismanic qualities or magical powers. Since pre-historic times, stone has had symbolic importance for human kind, and has assumed magical qualities:

> The hardness and durability of stone have always impressed men, suggesting to them the antithesis to biological things subject to the laws of change, decay and death[7].

Significantly, the sect's stone, or the 'Challanco', is known by its members as 'the Book or the Map'. It is defined by Chatwin as the evil eye since it is used by the members of the sect to spy 'On all members of the hierarchy'. In this instance, the stone assumes all the negative qualities of black witchcraft. Chatwin's discussion of the sect and its practices is characterised by a fascination with its bizarre and brutal behaviour. This is a world away from the accepted morality of England and Chatwin's upbringing - something completely outside civilised life.

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[7] *Dictionary of Symbols*, fore. Herbert Read and transl. Jock Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 299.

This stone of the sect is echoed in the last chapters of the text in the figures of both Albert Konrad and the salesman from Santiago whom Chatwin describes. Albert Konrad, the goldminer who blew up the stratigraphy in the mylodon (brontosaurus) cave, collected stones, mistakenly believing them to be gold. The salesman has a 'pocket full of stones' and declaims poetry to an uncomprehending world. He makes arrangements of stones saying 'These are my friends', and sees the 'imprint of God upon a humble stone' (*I.P.* p. 185). At the journey's end, (or what the reader is told of the journey's end), Chatwin leaves Patagonia on a ship, and the salesman is on board too. This final water crossing seems to have parallels with the crossing of the River Styx - a return from the land of the dead. In *Patagonia Revisited*, Chatwin discusses Magellan's voyage around the Patagonian coast as a kind of archetypal voyage to hell, connected to Dante's vision of Ulysses' attempt to reach the Mountain of Purgatory. This journey resulted in Ulysses 'burning in the Eighth Ring of Hell for having attempted to reach the forbidden mountain, not as a dead soul, but as a living man thirsting for knowledge'[8]. As Chatwin says, 'when they [Magellan and his crew] peered across the Straits at the north shore of Fireland, they could perhaps be forgiven for mistaking the Fuegian camp fires for dead souls burning in Hell'[9]. This crossing of boundaries undertaken by both Ulysses and Magellan is mirrored in Chatwin's own crossing of the water. Chatwin's quest is ostensibly for the remains of a mythic creature, but it is much more than this; it is a quest for knowledge as well as an exploration of the human spirit. The goodness the salesman sees in the stones, may be a sign of Chatwin's return to the 'normal' world; a return from the 'Other Side of the Globe'.

The salesman gives a stone to a fellow passenger, a boy who is unable to comprehend the potential of the stone or the possible magic it contains:

> 'Bout time the Argentines took us over' he said, 'We're so bloody inbred.'
>
> . . . 'Look what he gave me, a bloody stone!' (*I.P.* p. 186).

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[8] Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux, *Patagonia Revisited* (1985; London: Jonathan Cape, 1993), p. 53.

[9] Chatwin and Theroux, p. 57.

Perhaps the boy's inability to perceive anything special in the stone is another sign that Chatwin is moving out of the mystical land and back to the realm of the ordinary. There might even be a connection with the Celtic stones of England here - the standing stones such as those found at Stonehenge - that have spiritual significance and power. Mad the salesman might be, as the boy on the boat believes, but he offers a balance to the brutality and bestiality that Chatwin describes elsewhere.

Butch Cassidy, another of Chatwin's preoccupations in the text, is like the salesman in that he presents an alternative way of viewing this world. While he is an outlaw, Cassidy has his own moral scruples. As Chatwin says: 'Butch Cassidy never killed a man. Yet his friends were seasoned killers; their murders drove him to fits of remorse' (*I.P.* p. 46). Cassidy's actions are wild but they are familiar (robberies and cattle rustling rather than murder) - more English than Patagonian, more the stuff of fairytale than witchcraft. And yet, Chatwin refuses to pin Cassidy down completely, allowing him to change names and disguises as easily as a member of the Brujero Sect. Chatwin suggests that it is impossible to know the world completely - that Patagonia, peopled with outlaws, killers, exiles and monsters is at once alien and familiar, the half-known and the unknowable. Chatwin reveals that Patagonia is not a miniature England with the same morals and values - rather it is a place where limits and beliefs can be tested and explored.

Chatwin assumes a post-colonial position here, questioning the belief-system and morality of the centre (England), as well as exploring the difference and potential of a place on the periphery (Patagonia). In a sense, Chatwin is experimenting with Carlos Fuentes' proposition that 'The eccentric world is now central, and perhaps the only way to be central in the future will be to be an eccentric'[10]. Ironically, Chatwin is himself British, although he has family connections with Patagonia (cousin Charley).

In Patagonia reveals, as well, a very postmodern awareness of the difficulties inherent in attempting to 'tell' history or 'reality'. Chatwin

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[10] Carlos Fuentes quoted in Pico Iyor, 'The Empire Writes Back', *Time* February 1993, p. 58.

makes no claims about what he is attempting to do in his text - unlike the attempted realism of Freya Stark, who addresses her reader with claims of objectivity and documentary 'fact'. Chatwin simply relates the story of his travels, but the selection that occurs, the multiple stories he gives voice to and the text he produces, are intensely subjective. Chatwin seems to be attempting to get at the 'heart' of Patagonia, but the truths he produces are highly contradictory, and ultimately suggest that 'truth' is an impossibility.

Chatwin's insistence on multiple stories, and therefore multiple truths, reflects one of the major concerns of twentieth century fiction. Modernists like Lawrence, Joyce, and Woolf wrote narratives that emphasise the impossibility of a single truth. As Linda Hutcheon points out, it is an issue the postmodernists deal with as well, although it would seem to be a result of their concerns with historicity as well as subjectivity. 'Postmodern[ism] . . . openly asserts that there are only truths in the plural and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness per se, just others' truths'[11]. This is emphasised by the narrative technique Chatwin uses. Although *In Patagonia* is related in the first-person, and appears to be autobiographical, Chatwin 'tells' his journey through the anecdotes of others. He provides vignettes of other peoples' histories and experiences, as well as descriptions of actual voyages and exploration. Chatwin's Patagonia is peopled with misfits, outcasts, outlaws, and exiles. He focuses on legendary figures like Butch Cassidy but also on unknown, marginalised people whose stories don't usually get told. For example, there is the soprano who 'came to Argentina, the land of opportunity and the tango in the early 1930s' (*I.P.* p. 61). Chatwin's descriptions of her emphasise the marginalised nature of her existence, and suggest the potential of a past life:

> She was waiting for me, a white face behind a dusty window. She smiled, her painted mouth unfurling as a red flag caught in a sudden breeze. Her hair was dyed dark-auburn. Her legs were a mesopotamia of varicose veins . . . . She showed me copies of her song . . . The tempo was a slow waltz (*I.P.* p. 61).

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[11] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 108.

Then there is Alexander MacLennan, a Scotsman who emigrated to Patagonia in the late 1800s. Chatwin describes the exploits of this man who became known as the 'Red Pig'. MacLennan's story is told by Chatwin and by two English spinster sisters he meets:

> He was not among the farm-managers who offered $1 sterling for every Indian ear: he preferred to do the killing himself. He hated to see any animal in pain .... From the cliffs the Red Pig and his men watched the beach run red with blood and the rising tide forced them [an Indian hunting party] within range. They bagged at least fourteen head that day (*I.P.* p. 112).

MacLennan's actions seem to match those of the Brujera sect, as well as the bestiality and the grotesque descriptions of landscape that are provided elsewhere. MacLennan is a human being 'on the turn' - notions of 'normal' morality do not seem to concern him. His beliefs and actions reflect a kind of metamorphosis from the sane/normal/moral/spiritual to the inhuman and anti-spiritual.

As well as the stories of people Chatwin meets on his travels, he also incorporates the 'bigger' stories that have helped to shape Western history and notions of the world. Thus he draws on a number of exploration documents as well as literary works. Chatwin explains his interest at the beginning of *Patagonia Revisited* when he says in relation to himself and Paul Theroux:

> ... if we are travellers at all, we are literary travellers. A literary reference or connection is likely to excite us as much as a rare animal or plant; and so we touch on some of the instances in which Patagonia has affected the literary imagination'[12].

Chatwin dots his text with references to past sea voyages to Patagonia. He discusses Magellan's discovery of the Straits between mainland Patagonia and Terra del Fuego in 1520, Captain John Davis's desperate struggle for survival aboard the *Desire* in 1539 and Darwin's visit aboard the *Beagle* in 1830. Chatwin also includes consideration of the sources for Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Poe's

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[12] Chatwin and Theroux, p. 7.

Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, concluding that all are a consequence of actual sea voyages and geographical discoveries related to Patagonia.

This drawing on multiple texts about Patagonia raises questions about the ways in which we 'know' a particular place. Chatwin infers that our understanding of place is a construction - specifically a language construction. The intertextual nature of *In Patagonia*, signifies its fundamental inter-relationships with other texts. In a sense, Patagonia does not exist outside of the texts written about it. Likewise, Chatwin's mixing of historical 'facts', which seem unbelievable but are ostensibly true (such as the 'loathsome worm' of Captain Davis' voyage), with fictions or myths which seem believable but are probably untrue, is reflective of the postmodern questioning of the relationship between fiction and reality.

The voyages and texts that Chatwin discusses were all enacted from, or constructed in, traditional 'centres' - England, Spain, North America - just as Chatwin's journey is. Yet as a travel writer, Chatwin moves beyond the external vision of past sailors and writers by walking through Patagonia (rather than voyaging to it), talking to its inhabitants, presenting their stories, and attempting to present a focus from the inside. What Chatwin does is present the post-colonial perspective - the ex-centric or marginalised position, by giving voice to the stories of the exiled inhabitants of Patagonia. There is also an element of the Gothic in this. These are the stories of people other than the middle-class, the rational, the 'normal'. The marginalised figures that Chatwin presents are lonely, alienated, odd, and bizarre, and their actions tend towards the taboo areas of social action and intercourse. As David Punter acknowledges there is a 'taboo quality . . . [to] many of the themes to which Gothic addresses itself - incest, rape, various kinds of transgressions of the boundaries between the natural and the human, the human and the divine'[13]. The Gothic deals with terror, the 'unadmitted' and 'uneasy social and psychological situation[s]', as well as revealing 'a particular antagonistic attitude towards realism'[14], and it is just this that

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[13] David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 19.
[14] Punter, p. 20.

Chatwin explores and reveals in his physical, psychological, historical and literary journeys through Patagonia.

While not usually associated with an 'antagonistic attitude towards realism' being more usually accepted as documentation of fact, nor with terror and moral transgressions, in a sense many of the written records of the voyages of exploration are tinged with an element of the Gothic because of the very nature of encounter with 'Otherness', and the massive leap of the imagination required to envisage and then make such voyages. Chatwin's description of the penguin massacre that occurs on Captain John Davis's voyage is just one example, and his discussion of Magellan's experiences in sailing to and then through the South West passage is another. By drawing on these voyages of exploration, Chatwin insists that Patagonia's extreme southernness, its sea-bound nature and its vicinity at the other side of the world is the essence of its 'Otherness'. In Chatwin's version of Patagonia with its emphasis on exile, brutality and loneliness, this southern land is the empty region of the spirit - the anti-spirit and anti-moral. By extension, a journey to Patagonia is a 'voyage of annihilation and rebirth' in just the way the voyages of Coleridge's Mariner and Melville's Ishmael are.

Ironically, the voice of Chatwin the narrator seems unmoved by these experiences. The text is a documentation and exploration of, immorality and bestiality, yet the voice remains removed and unaffected. Perhaps this, once again, emphasises the postmodern nature of this text - a preoccupation with, and testing of, the boundaries of conventional morality. Chatwin, then, is not at all concerned with confession or the relating of personal growth as Matthiessen and Davidson are, nor is he seeking a personal utopia as Durrell and Lawrence seem to be. Chatwin's focus is language and writing, and the constructions of the 'real' that result.

Chatwin ends his text with a description of the sea voyage for which he has waited one week:

> the ship started pitching and banging into three-cornered waves. In the morning, black petrels were slicing the swells and through the mist we saw chutes of water foaming off the cliffs (*I.P.* p. 186).

This voyage suggests the many sea voyages Chatwin has drawn on throughout the text, particularly, because of the talismanic stones and the presence of the petrels, the ill-fated journey of Captain John Davis and the equally tragic journey of the Mariner. The reader cannot be sure whether Chatwin is heading back to mainland Patagonia, or whether this is the first stage in the long trip back to England. This open-endedness, or lack of closure, provides another postmodern element to the text. This is not a return, nor is it a journey progressing forward for Chatwin's journey is not a linear one - Patagonia is a multi-layered experience which does not necessarily lead on to anywhere else.

Chatwin's journey and text does not include the completion of the traditionally circular-shaped quest. Rather, the reader is left with the sensation of incompleteness - the image of Chatwin, onboard ship, in the company of the salesman with his talismanic stones and the young boy, while in the background a Chilean businessman plays *La Mer*. Essentially, Chatwin is alone; a small consciousness surrounded by the unconscious. Chatwin subverts the mythic structure he has taken considerable time to set up. In his refusal to end this journey where it started, Chatwin suggests that he is no mythic hero, and England is not the 'centre', nor a safe-house of moral rightness. Thus, Chatwin questions the 'centred' vision of many travel writers, but he refuses to set Patagonia up as an alternative centre. The Patagonia Chatwin presents *is* an antipodean realm fashioned from history, literature and the lives of exiles, but although it is a marginalised de-centred place, the author shows that it is, ironically, the source for much of what is English. For instance, Chatwin draws on Darwin and Shakespeare as examples of the centre and tradition who were inspired by the margins: he claims Darwin's theories germinated in Patagonia (*I.P.* p. 111), and that Shakespeare's Caliban was inspired by Magellan's capture of two giants from Patagonia (*I.P.* p. 92).

In refusing to comply with realist conventions of closure, or more specifically, with the safe return of the questing hero, Chatwin's ending also re-emphasises his concern with appropriate ways of 'telling' history or fact. There is no 'proper' ending to Chatwin's journey, just as the 'truth' of

history and experience is not contained in simple facts. As Linda Hutcheon says:

> Postmodern fiction [and I would add, non-fiction] suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological'[15].

There is no sense of even grim (or Grimm's) fairytale in Conrad's descriptions of Tasmania. He stresses the isolation and remoteness of this island and without saying it literally, suggests that Tasmania, too, is at the far end of the world. However, Conrad does generate a similar sense of the unknown, but the sense of possibility that Chatwin sees in the Patagonian landscape is not present in Conrad's view of Tasmania. On the first page of *Down Home*, Conrad says:

> We were an offshore island off the shore of an offshore continent, victims of a two-fold alienation . . . beneath . . . [Australia's] south-east tip was an even remoter version of itself, a site of internal exile. This was our little serrated triangle of rock . . . (*D.H.* p. 3).

Conrad's use of words such as 'alienation', 'victims' 'remoter' and 'exile' shows he regards Tasmania as a place of exclusion. His language implies a separation from something valuable. In Conrad's view, the very remoteness of Tasmania precludes any sense of possibility.

Chatwin sets out from the country of childhood to find the savage, frightening, mysterious adult world of Patagonia, but Conrad's journey is a return to a childhood landscape (the book is sub-titled 'Revisiting Tamania') from what he sees as the centre of the adult world, England. Conrad's concern is with coming to terms with the 'reality' of Tasmania, unlike Chatwin's preoccupation with the multiple 'truths' of Patagonia. Conrad left Tasmania for England at the age of 21, imagining that country to be far more civilised, intellectual and comfortable than Tasmania. This vision of England grew out of his reading of traditional books as well as from his perception of Tasmania as a place of conflict between parochial suburbia and unknowable, untameable wilderness. The England that Conrad yearns for,

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[15] Hutcheon, p. 110.

however, is a literary construction, a kind of pastoral fiction. Conrad is unable to see either reality clearly: his England is a cultural image created from texts and history books, and his Tasmania is simply, devastatingly not-England. To Conrad, the Tasmanian landscape that encircled the small urban centres was a place where beasts roamed and horror dwelt. The realm of 'there be dragons' was not a remote and far-off land, but the very land that surrounded him. This view, of course, echoes the colonial frame of mind that saw the colonies as miniature-Britains surrounded by the wild antipodean, a long way from the 'real' centre. Such a view emphasises the immediate environment as alien and hostile.

Conrad goes to great lengths to describe the alienation he felt from the environment as well as from family - a sense of not belonging. He portrays Tasmania as removed from the 'real' world, remote and isolated; a place where man does not really belong:

> What continued to terrify me was the rawness, the shivering vulnerability of the place. A settlement had happened here by chance. It would take a long while for the world to acquire upholstery, the soothing sense that it had been made ready for us to inhabit (*D.H.* p. 18).

It is in this respect that metaphor creeps into Conrad's text. The landscape is almost too big, too wild for Conrad to grasp.

Conrad's descriptions of the physical environment are marked by extremes. Tasmania is either hell-on-earth or paradise, there is no in-between. In 'On the Farm', Conrad describes his childhood delight in his mother's farm. He provides us with bucolic descriptions of a rural paradise recalling the Talbothays dairy in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* - linking it with an archetypal Eden:

> The farm to me was a wonderland: acres of space to get lost in; tumbledown barns like toy-chests of quirky gadgetry; forests of fruit trees with a long unkempt uphill paddock where plovers nested; the bed of a sunken creek, choked with ferns disputing its trickle of water (*D.H.* pp. 38-9).

Later in the chapter, Conrad explains how his childish eyes mis-represented reality. He describes the farm as a tumbledown, tawdry place, and his earlier paradisiacal terms are replaced with hellish descriptions :

> There's a narrow stretch of cultivated ground, and the foothills are sheared up to their crowns; then the glowering bush resumes. Down in the valley, you hear a perpetual muffled roar above, the tall gums on the heights which sigh and crack and thrash in the wind seepage of acids from the roots of plants has blackened it; it looks lethal, Lethe-like . . . (*D.H.* p. 41).

Conrad's language here - 'sheared', 'glowering', 'perpetual muffled roar', 'sigh and crack and thrash', 'blackened', 'lethal' - is violent and negative, precluding any hope of connection with, or affection for the environment.

On page 5 of *Down Home*, Conrad provides a very accurate map of Tasmania that shows the amount of land belonging to State Forest and names the main towns. It also locates Tasmania with respect to the rest of Australia and the Southern Ocean. This map is clear and concise, with place names neatly labelled in black ink. Everything about it seems orderly, regimented and contained. Indeed, the outline of Tasmania easily contains the place names, and the amount of empty space leaps out at the eye. The bareness of Conrad's map seems to indicate the rawness of which he complains. This is in great contrast to the map Chatwin provides in *In Patagonia*. This map is a hazy reprint, where the names on the map overshadow and blur the outline of the country. At the top of this map the title Patagonia stretches inside a swirling tag, reminiscent of early explorers' maps. These two maps seem to exemplify each author's attitude to place and landscape. Where Conrad's map is apparently straightforward and prosaic, Chatwin's suggests more than actually meets the eye. While Conrad is attempting to contain Tasmania, make sense of it and come to terms with it, Chatwin is moved by the potential of Patagonia, the enormous possibility that lies in its remoteness and in the very place names themselves.

I have argued that in Chatwin's text, the physicality of Patagonia is subordinate to the spiritual qualities. Patagonia becomes an imaginary realm where the human spirit can be explored, through the notions of quest, exile and isolation. However, in *Down Home* the physical landscape of

Tasmania is dominant, and it is on this very physical landscape people are superimposed and exposed, to struggle for survival. In Conrad's view, the geography of Tasmania is overwhelming and it is easier to subvert this physicality rather than come to terms with it. As he says much later in the text, 'the Art I like was an appeasement. It rendered Tasmania habitable by depicting a fiction' (*D.H.* p. 181). Conrad devotes a whole chapter, 'Scenic Schemes' to a discussion of Tasmanian Art, discovering that a whole generation of artists were, like him, unable to come to terms with the Tasmanian landscape, preferring to clothe it in colours and disguises that conjure England. Conrad says:

> I didn't mind the infidelity. In fact I derived a comfort from watching Tasmania misrepresented like this. It proved that reality needn't be taken as given: it was manipulable according to your own compulsive way of seeing (*D.H.* p. 181).

Conrad manipulates the 'reality' of Tasmania, just as the nineteenth century painters did. His Tasmania is a peculiarly solipsistic one, a place of bogeys and beasts, peopled by exiles and misfits; people who have been marginalised by the environment.

His own sense of being a misfit in Tasmania, abandoned far from some more 'real birthplace, is expressed in the first question Peter Conrad voices in *Down Home*: 'Where am I?' It is an echo from the past as well as a continuing existential dilemma for this author[16]. Conrad wants to locate both his childhood home and his catapulting, late twentieth century self which hovers between London, New York, Oxford and Lisbon. He recalls a childhood experience at a gymkhana, when he burst into tears, filled with a sense of dissatisfaction and misery, wondering desperately 'Where am I?'. Conrad establishes himself as the hero of his own text and Tasmania is presented through his eyes and judgements, rather than through the stories of others. Conrad's story sounds very much like that of the archetypal hero-myth. Conrad fantasises about being the central character of a changeling folktale - swapped at birth and forced to grow up with foster parents. Like Chatwin, then, Conrad also draws on myth, but to very different ends. As

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[16] A later work by Peter Conrad has an autobiographical title that emphasises his sense of being born in an alien place: *Where I Fell to Earth* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1990).

we have seen, Chatwin reveals a suspicion of myth and of closure, whereas at the very beginning of his text, Conrad is searching for happy endings. Over thirty years later, Conrad is able to say of Tasmania, 'There is no need to be afraid, to feel exposed [here]', but he qualifies this with 'Still, just outside this haven lurks the sense of destitution - of having been abandoned here' (*D.H.* p. 9). Tasmania, to Conrad, is still the far-end-of-the-world, a place unchanged, provincial, parochial and isolated.

As a child, Conrad says he was 'Busy imagining the beyond'. He lay 'dreaming of the lighted world which hung around the curve of the globe above us . . . [and he] paid less and less attention to Tasmania itself' (*D.H.* p. 10). Conrad confesses that he made no attempt to come to terms with Tasmania, rather he imagines the 'Other' - a civilised and glamorous place on the 'right' side of the world.

Conrad's flight of mind is the opposite of the explorer or the traveller who yearns for strange and unknown lands. Conrad seeks the culturally known realm of England, fleeing what he does not know, without testing it for familiarity first. Tasmania's alien qualities are a 'given' to Conrad's way of thinking, produced not by empirical observation but by words or texts - the signifiers do not accord with the signified. In a sense, Conrad re-embraces all those qualities so many early twentieth century writers and travellers staunchly rejected - the safe haven of England, the polite parlour conversations, tradition and convention. As Fussell puts it in *Abroad*:

> After the [first] world war something new and recognisably 'postwar' surfaces in British intellectual and imaginative life . . . . departure is attended by the conviction that England is uninhabitable because it is not like abroad[17]

Born 'abroad', Conrad yearns to leave the uninhabitable Tasmania for England, simply because Tasmania is *not* England, exhibiting a particularly colonial view of his relationship to the centre. Conrad fits the mould of English writers of the 1950s like Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis, who as Fussell points out, 'stubbornly reinstalled themselves in England and

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[17] Fussell, p. 15.

became . . . "little Englanders" ', rejecting the notions of new worlds and 'Otherness'.

Unlike many writers in post-colonial countries, Conrad turns to, rather than away from, the 'mother' country. Rather than invent a new way of writing and of seeing, as, for example, writers like Michael Ondaatje (Sri Lanka/Canada), Chinua Achebe (Africa) and Salman Rushdie (India) have, Conrad reinstates conventional and comfortable myths or assumptions by using traditional forms and expressing traditional views. Salman Rushdie emphasises the unreal (unreal by the standards of a fictional idealisation of England) and fantastical nature of India to that country's advantage, drawing on irony and parody, but Conrad is unable to embrace the differences of Tasmania, and emphasises them in order to highlight the superiority of England. In contrast to Rushdie, Conrad's book is devoid of any kind of irony; the narrator is serious, but without any close self-examination.

Although *Down Home* is autobiographical and therefore, has some grounding in realist non-fiction, the book also incorporates elements of Romantic and Gothic fiction which are used to support Conrad's thesis of the 'unreality' of Tasmania as compared with the 'reality' of England. Like Chatwin, Conrad emphasises the bizarre and irrational aspects of the place he visits/revisits, but to very different ends. He sees Tasmania as a place of exile, home to marginalised people, but instead of celebrating or exploring their stories, Conrad finds the tawdry in what has the potential to be extraordinary. Conrad emphasises, for example, the Tasmanian myths that grew out of its origins as a penal colony of particular brutality, and rather than see the potential and difference inherent in such a beginning, Conrad chooses to see it as damning the nature of Tasmania forever. He mentions other myths in a similar manner, such as the jokes about the supposed incest of Tasmanian families. These stories of Tasmanian life have a Gothic flavour in their relation to the barbaric and the taboo, but they serve to emphasise Conrad's own alienation from, and distaste for, Tasmania, without providing any potential for a questioning of the status quo, much less for epiphany or subversion. If Punter is right when he defines the Gothic, stating:

> the contradictions and falsities underneath [society] will . . . surface . . . and in unpleasantly transmuted forms, and it is here that the Gothic is located, at the social interface between the bourgeoisie and its largely self-appointed enemies, at the psychological interface between the well-ordered psyche and its rebel subjects[18],

then Conrad's use of the Gothic appears inverted. Conrad draws on the Gothic to confirm his own angst about his Tasmanian origins rather than to point to any 'truths' about the human condition.

Using Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, Conrad further establishes what he sees as the Gothic nature of Tasmania:

> The Gothic is sent into exile, beyond the Alps and the Pyrenees; its abominations belong, Catherine believes, to Italy, Switzerland and the south of France. She couldn't have known that the Gothic monsters she had conjured up had been extradited to the Antipodes (*D.H.* p. 90).

Later Conrad says,

> Tasmania was a Gothic society. The heroines of Mrs Radcliffe's novels shuddered so deliciously at the thought of Italian monasteries, because they were closed-off enclaves of barbaric penance; Tasmania was such a psychic prison, expanded to fill the entire island (*D.H.* p. 143).

This notion of Tasmania as a 'psychic prison' permeates Conrad's rediscovery of his place of birth and is emphasised by Conrad's sense of the surrounding environment being *nowhere*.

Accounts are provided of the journeys Conrad made as a child and adolescent, along the main road, through the tawdry, unsophisticated outer suburbs as he made his way to the city, Hobart, and back again. He says of this route,

> If you strayed too far from the road, you arrived at nowhere - the sodden jungles and soiled mountains of the west coast, the incest-ridden fable-haunted back blocks of the east. It was the geometer's first national organising of the wild. Beyond its thin, safe line were dragons, or at least devils (*D.H.* p. 17).

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[18] Punter, pp. 425-526.

For Conrad, both the familiar (the tawdry suburbs) and the unfamiliar (the physical landscape) are equally uninspiring. They are both *nowhere.* Conrad does at least attempt to explore the familiar - the suburbs of Hobart - but in finding it appallingly lacking, he is not prompted into a discovery of the unfamiliar. Throughout *Down Home,* Conrad maintains he was and is searching. He says 'My first trips on the road were in search of a past I could rummage for and carry home to read and to re-enliven' (*D.H.* p. 21) and 'When starting out along the road, I was travelling in search of ownable pasts' (*D.H.* p. 20). Conrad thinks that he is searching - perhaps for history/tradition in an English frame. Yet the reader of *Down Home* is left with a sense of disbelief, of possible self-deprecation, since Conrad seems concerned not with search, but only with flight. Both his memories and his recent experiences become journeys of escape rather than rediscovery.

The dragons and devils that Conrad mentions are again prompters of flight rather than exploration. And they re-confirm Tasmania as the end-of-the-earth. It is not until Conrad's return, twenty years later, that he ventures into this dragon's realm - the 'sodden jungles and soiled mountains' of Tasmania's south-west. Even from the regulated environment of a plane, Conrad wants the physical landscape to be tamer and more civilised:

> . . . its not a national park like in the United States, where you drive through in an air-conditioned cocoon, pause at the designated lookouts. The Tasmanian south-west is a drenched, wind-lashed nowhere of boggy plains and jagged peaks (*D.H.* p. 55).

Conrad's descriptions of this particular journey conjure up magic and primitivism: 'You're made aware of the journey's drama because it depends on omens and the interpenetration of the intemperate sky' (*D.H.* p. 55). Conrad emphasises the lack of control he feels over the physical environment - unlike the man-made environment, the wilderness is an irrational realm, where man's/woman's desires have no impact. To Conrad, this aspect of the physical looms large, assuming frightening and threatening proportions. He says:

> . . . the landscape began to reorganise itself as an abstract . . . The view from the air here is not of an uninhabitable world but of one where

> habitation pushes against the wet, seething entanglement of nature and the cranky irregularities of terrain (*D.H.* p. 56).

Conrad sees the landscape as unrelenting and indomitable. A sense of disempowerment is strong here, and it relates to the sexual imagery implicit in the language he uses and in the binary position established. Conrad uses terms such as 'interpenetration', 'pushes' and 'wet, seething entanglement' which contrast with his own masculine containment and desire for order. On the one hand there is the male observer, linked with civilisation, culture and habitation and this is opposed to nature which is somehow viewed as female with its 'cranky irregularities'. Conrad's position is far removed from conventional imaging of 'the land-is-woman' that Annette Kolodny discusses in *The Lay of the Land*[19], but it is perhaps as potentially dangerous in its binary positioning and polarised perspective.

Conrad feels himself to be an imposter or interloper in this environment: 'Those of us who crawl from the plane feel embarrassed by the emptiness, and the howling silence between this marsh and the mountains' (*D.H.* p. 88). Later he develops this with:

> The Tasmanian south-west forbids any sense of romantic kinship. Romanticism is the fair-weather creed of milder climates and a domesticated nature . . . Down here, nature and human affections are incommensurate (*D.H.* p. 58).

To Conrad, the south-west is a no-man's land, unpeopled and unable to sustain any kind of relationship with man. Yet he makes no mention of Deny King's tin mine, nor the relationship King manifestly had with the south-west. He also ignores figures like Olegas Truchanas, one of the major forces behind the concept of national parks and wilderness in Tasmania. Through his solo explorations of the south-west by foot and kayak, and the slide shows he held in the Hobart Town Hall, Truchanas helped to establish powerful myths of place, specifically of wild places. Conrad refuses to address such issues or consider such figures.

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[19] In *The Lay of the Land* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), Kolodny examines the pastoral impulse in American Literature, concluding that a new symbol other than 'the land-is-woman' is required for ways of viewing the environment if it is going to survive: 'we can no longer afford to keep turning "America the Beautiful" into *America the Raped.*'

Conrad's comment on Romanticism is suggestive. He rejects this style, claiming it is inappropriate for the Tasmanian environment. He says Romanticism is 'for a domesticated nature', inferring that nature in Tasmania will never be tamed. Yet, for many of the Romantics, domesticated nature was not the source of inspiration. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Thoreau and Whitman argue eloquently for the freedom and inspiration that an untamed physical environment engender. There is an ambiguity in Conrad's comments here, as though he recognises the possibility of a Wordsworthian response to the landscape - a recognition of its primacy and power and of the spiritual links that could be developed - but is unprepared to follow through such a response. Ironically, in *Down Home*, after rejecting Romanticism, Conrad reveals himself as the very type of the Romantic protagonist - in the confessional aspect of his writing, the journeying it involves, the attempt to attain yet never completely achieving, and the melancholy aspect of the Romantic hero.

Conrad seems to be the unwilling Romantic: aware of the autonomy of nature - its primacy - but unable to view that in any positive light. For Conrad, there is no alliance between man and nature, instead the two exist independently, nature barely tolerating man's presence. He says in the chapter 'On the Mountain':

> . . . the mountain ignores the incursion of its human users: the scar of road which crawls round ledges to the summit, the television towers which have been screwed into its adamantine head . . . It is the land's skeleton, indifferent to organic fates or elemental distresses'. (*D.H.* p. 31).

Conrad imposes his own citified relationship with the land, calling the south-west 'the world's end' and dissociating it from any human realm or venture. He says 'in human terms, the south-west has no history' (*D.H.* pp. 59-60), yet for thousands of years, Tasmanian Aborigines roamed this region of the world, not removed from the environment but a part of it. Robyn Davidson's comment on an Aboriginal sense of place highlights Conrad's schism of city versus country:

> For them the notion of home or country, connotes utter belonging, and gives them a certitude concerning their function in the universe which acts as a kind of ballast as they sail through the tempest of late twentieth century existence[20].

In his perpetual flight, the late twentieth century Conrad is unable to come to terms with the notions of home and belonging (in *Where I Fell to Earth*, Conrad cites three homes in New York, Lisbon and London), and as a consequence, his representations of landscape and place are inspired by fear rather than understanding.

Conrad's thesis is that the Tasmanian landscape and nature are alien to humankind and incompatible with our needs. He stresses the inhospitable qualities of the land[21]. Conrad wanted to swap the remoteness of Tasmania for the familiarity - the culture, history and aesthetics - of England. He translates remoteness into hostility - Mt. Wellington becomes 'a practical joker, a master of disguise, taunting us with its transformations'. The mountain cannot win, it is either bleak, windswept and malevolent on purpose, or 'tropically dry' in order to emphasise Tasmania's inadequacies:

> Before Hobart had been wiped away by cloud; today it was lost in the landscape . . . Here was Australia in little; a society gobbled up by an allocation of earth too large for it, clinging in trepidation to the shore (*D.H.* p. 34).

Rather than peopling the countryside as Chatwin peoples Patagonia, Conrad depopulates Tasmania. He mentions family and acquaintances, but is not concerned with exploring the human psyche in any depth. Conrad's journey tells his own solipsistic story with only little snippets of others' stories thrown in. *Down Home* is very different in this respect to *In*

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[20] Robyn Davidson, *Travelling Light* (Sydney: William Collins, 1989), p. 131.

[21] Conrad neglects to mention, however, that for many Tasmanians the concept of wilderness and man's impact on it are enormously important issues. The last twenty years have seen the Tasmanian community polarised by the issues of progress and preservation. The damming of Lake Pedder and the proposed damming of the Franklin River provoked a huge growth in environmentalism. Tasmania was also home to the first Green party in the world. Cassandra Pybus discusses *Down Home* in relation to the Green politics of Tasmania in her article, 'The Landscape of Self: Peter Conrad's Tasmania', in *Meanjin* Vol. 48, No. 4 1989, pp. 797-804.

Patagonia; the reader learns a lot about Conrad from his text but very little of Chatwin from his.

Conrad says of Tasmania, 'It is a countryside of ghost towns and graveyards' (*D.H.* p. 80), suggesting that this landscape is more at ease with the dead than the living: 'this tough and taciturn landscape, inured, can absorb an endless succession of . . . [deaths] (*D.H.* p. 82). Just as Chatwin's Patagonian landscape assumes the immoral aspect of its human population, Conrad's Tasmanian landscape is barren, reflecting the emptiness and futility of human endeavour. The physical landscape is representative of Conrad's attitude to the Tasmanian psyche.

There is a rather Gothic element to this emphasis on the macabre and the ghostly. Conrad's Tasmania could be the setting for a Gothic romance with its inhospitable countryside, its tiny population, and its silent, brutal history. The intertextuality of *Down Home* emphasises this also. Like Chatwin, Conrad draws on a number of earlier texts that have some reference to Tasmania, as well as to films that have been made in Tasmania. As discussed earlier, Conrad mentions Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* saying of its heroine, 'She couldn't have known that the Gothic monsters she had conjured up had been extradited to the antipodes'(*D.H.* p. 90), and he calls on Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life* as further proof of the Gothic nature of Tasmania. Conrad does admit that the 'truths' of these fictions are the 'dangerously wishful ones of art' and that 'Clarke himself is a partner in the abuses he decries' (*D.H.* p. 91). Conrad fails to admit, however, that the Tasmania he re-presents is a created one, a Gothic fiction itself.

In *Down Home*, Conrad attempts to come to terms with his past and place of origin, but like the nineteenth century English landscape painters, he lets his imagination colour reality. As he says himself: 'Once art has learned how to represent the world, it advances to the greater glory of misrepresentation' (*D.H.* p. 171). Conrad seems unable to see beyond the colonial view of England as the centre, and the colony (ex-colony) as a backwater surrounded by a hostile environment. Thus, the Tasmanian

landscape remains for Conrad, like the summit of Mt. Wellington: 'an arrival at extinction' (*D.H.* p. 33).

CONCLUSION

> Books of travel will be good in proportion to what a man has previously in his mind; his knowing what to observe; his power of contrasting one mode of life with another. As the Spanish proverb says, 'He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry the wealth of the Indies with him.'
>
> Samuel Johnson

> So pack your bags and go on your travels before it is too late. There are still vast tracts of the world which beg to be visited; and travel will give you a wealth of experience and pleasure which can be drawn on for the rest of your life - a wealth, furthermore, which no government can ever take away . . . Our greatest disappointments are nearly always for what we *haven't* done - not for what we *have* done.
>
> John Hatt

Given the complex nature of travel writing and its resistance to a single definition, the changes and developments in this field of literature in the twentieth century are not surprising. Equally, to assume that a perfect chronological and linear trajectory could be traced across this century is naive and simplistic. There are many other travel books that do not fit the developments or progression articulated in this thesis - instead they make circular constellations, moving back and forth between the positions of the eight texts discussed. Freya Stark is a case in point: given the style and focus of her texts and the trends in literature at the time, her writing can only be described as anachronistic. Paul Theroux, writing much later in the century at a time of post-colonial and postmodernist ideas, conveys an imperialistic tone that is dismissive of other people and places. The writing of Bill Bryson and Tim Cahill is fast-paced, dominated by a sense of late twentieth century culture and off-beat humour which is quite different from any of the books discussed here.

Entirely different approaches could be made to the study of twentieth century travel writing than the one adopted in this thesis. There have been a number of studies done, for example, of specific types of travellers. Mark Cocker chose to focus on British travel writing and Paul Fussell confined

himself to British literary travellers between the two world wars. Equally valid studies would be to examine the texts of travellers to specific places such as Africa or South America or Papua New Guinea. Then there is the peculiarly English, self-deprecating humour and approach to encounters with other cultures, typical of Evelyn Waugh, Eric Newby and more recently, Dervla Murphy, or the travel narratives of women such as Christina Dodwell and Sorrel Wilby that chart physical and arduous journeys through remote places but do not reveal the spiritual dimensions so implicit in Matthiessen and Davidson's texts. Another interesting approach to twentieth century travel writing is the study of parallel journeys such as Barbara and Graham Greene's different accounts of the same journey undertaken in Africa, and Jonathan Raban and Paul Theroux's narratives of their separate but similarly-timed journeys around the coast of England. In the same way, accounts of twentieth century re-tracings of earlier journeys would be grounds for a fascinating study, for example, Caroline Alexander's journey in Mary Kingsley's footsteps and Gavin Maxwell and Gavin Young's different 're-livings' of Wilfred Thesiger's time with the Marsh Arabs.

My choice of texts and the approach I took was influenced by my desire to look at a broad spectrum of travellers (both female and male) across the century. Many studies tend to focus solely on male or female travellers and are restricted to particular periods or places. Theoretically, any number of writers could have been studied in the particular chapters - Gertrude Bell, for example, in chapter one, Charmain Clift or Norman Douglas in chapter two and Christina Dodwell in chapter three. However, while the choice appears highly selective at a first glance, each travel writer has been chosen for his/her influence, importance and connections with other travellers/writers, and I believe the parallels between the pairs of texts that emerge, and the issues and trends they point to, are startling and important.

The role of the observer/writer has altered enormously from Stark's imperialist position. Even Paul Theroux with his rather neo-colonial perspectives reveals a far more personal, subjective position and journey. Not one of the other seven travel writers discussed here is manifestly concerned with issues of empire or appropriation; the focus is the personal. Nor are they concerned with mimetic representations of the world. The twentieth century literary travel writer does not believe, as Stark did, that

fidelity to language and careful observation will produce an accurate representation of reality. Nor do many readers. The travel writers discussed here are much more concerned with recreating their own responses to the world and to experiences of reality. Chatwin in particular has heralded a new era where travellers/writers/readers are aware of place and culture as language constructions. Thus, the actual physical journey is filtered and altered through the eyes of the travel writer, becoming a different journey through language, and this becomes a different journey again when the reader moves through the pages of the book.

Feminist theory has also emphasised the (male) constructions of the world and of experience inherent in traditional canonical texts. Stark was raised on such literature and had a number of eminent men, including her godfather, as her role models. In her text she struggles to free herself from patriarchal discourse, but the nature of her travels (a woman travelling alone, taking on a conventionally male role in a part of the world where European men have journeyed traditionally) and her imperialist ideologies, result in a text that is fraught with ambiguities. Sackville-West also tends to adopt a male persona when writing about her travels. She refers to an imaginary traveller as 'he', draws heavily on Kinglake because, 'He said what I meant' (*P.T.* p. 15), and adopts a tone similar to the male, English, between-the-war traveller. In Sackville-West's case, however, this ambiguity can be seen to be aligned with Woolf's 'theory of androgyny and love of gender ambiguity'[1]. Davidson moves beyond the conventional male voice of the travel writer. Her text is personal and confessional in ways that Stark and Sackville-West would not have dreamed. She makes it explicit that her journey is a personal female one, a means of acquiring specific characteristics that she sees as male. As Elizabeth Wilson comments, 'if there is a typical literary form of feminism it is the fragmented, intimate form of confessional, personal testimony, autobiography, the diary, 'telling it like it was' '[2].

The maladjustment to the world that Raban cites as essential to a travel writer may, in this late twentieth century politically correct world,

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[1] Michele Barrett, 'Feminism and the Definition of Cultural Politics', *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. Mary Eagleton (1986; Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 162.

[2] Elizabeth Wilson, 'Mirror Writing: An Autobiography', *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, p.182.

create problems for the traveller/writer. Yet as Edward Said points out, expectations of difference have long been inherent in Westerners' views of the East. As he argues in *Culture and Imperialism*, the way forward is to attempt to understand difference. He quotes Eric Auerbach who uses an excerpt from Hugo of St. Victor, a twelfth century monk, to suggest a model for those wishing to 'transcend the restraints of imperial or national or provincial limits: 'but he is perfect to whom the entire world is a foreign place'[3]. Raban's maladjusted eye, then, becomes one that is not just curious, but concerned and aware, recognising that difference is inherent to all including the observer:

> It is more rewarding - and more difficult - to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about 'us'. But this also means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how 'our' culture or country is number one . . .[4]

There has been a reconsideration of the boundaries of fact and fiction in the twentieth century, a growing awareness that the polarities once believed in, are not really polarities at all. Travel writing has influenced this. Science and fiction blend in *The Snow Leopard* to the point that scientific reticence and objectivity, once held up as noble characteristics, are seen as potentially negative, and the power of the imagination and belief is reasserted. I am thinking specifically of Matthiessen's comments on the yeti here. In Chatwin's work traditional boundaries are questioned and blurred; a postmodern playfulness and a questioning of fact and fiction, real and unreal, ordinary and fantastic occurs.

The ways in which the landscape or environment is viewed and written about has changed enormously since Stark's straightforward descriptions. Both she and Sackville-West see their journeys as through and across particular landscapes; landscape is geography, and in Stark's case holds the potential for a new 'discovery'. The other writers tend to provide a much more human dimension to the land. Lawrence and Durrell view landscape quite differently from Stark. It becomes a living, breathing entity in its own right, highly influential in terms of the shaping of national identity, and in terms of its effect on the traveller. Matthiessen and

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[3] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 407.
[4] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 408.

Davidson make deliberate choices of extreme environments to travel to and through. The environment is part of the *process* of the journey and is enormously important in terms of its effects on the psyche of the traveller. Chatwin and Conrad view land quite differently again. The physical reality of a place or environment is subsumed by the metaphorical notions of it. Geography is once again important, but only in terms of position in relation to the 'centre' of the world.

Chatwin and Conrad's reliance on metaphor in relation to the land points to the changing role of metaphor, generally, in the works of literary travel writers. For Stark, metaphor is a literary term, a technique to be used to add resonance to her descriptions of place and people. All of the other writers use metaphor differently. To Lawrence, the land is seen in metaphoric terms; metaphor and allusion help to develop his own multi-layered response to Sardinia. With Durrell, a similar poetic and artistic use of metaphor occurs. In both writers, the land becomes a character - their responses to the land are almost similar to those in a human relationship. The experiences and supremely physical journeys of Matthiessen and Davidson assume metaphoric proportions. The journey is not simply literal, it is subsumed by the travel/travail undergone mentally, emotionally and spiritually; the journey is a metaphor for spiritual search. With Chatwin and Conrad, literal places assume imaginary dimensions. The journeys they undertake are metaphoric, but the places themselves are also metaphors for different psychological and spiritual states. As Salman Rushdie observes, 'the word *metaphor*, with its roots in the Greek words for *bearing across*, describes a sort of migration, the migration of ideas into images'[5]. Rushdie comments that the migrant is 'perhaps the central or defining figure of the twentieth century'[6]. Said, agrees with Rushdie's statement, commenting at length on exile and saying:

> . . . for surely it is one of the unhappiest characteristics of the age to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history, most of them as an accompaniment to and, ironically enough, as afterthoughts of great post-colonial and imperial conflicts[7].

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[5] Salman Rushdie, introduction to *Günter Grass on Writing and Politics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. x.
[6] Rushdie, p. viii.
[7] See pages 402-407 in *Culture and Imperialism.*

Whether a result of war, racial tension, financial pressures, work, or pure pleasure, increasingly in the twentieth century, larger proportions of people make journeys. These journeys may encompass travel in the sense of the voluntary journeys discussed in this thesis or they may be journeys of migration or exile. Travel/travail and movement are implicit in twentieth century life. For many people, the places of childhood are lost forever, and they have to struggle against what Rushdie describes as a 'triple disruption', a kind of three-fold alienation - exile, language barriers and loss of identity in an alien culture. For voluntary travellers it is usually only a two-fold alienation that occurs, and this is self-imposed with the knowledge that it will end just as soon as the traveller returns home. Travel writers such as Chatwin, however, seem determined to explore notions of exile for themselves. In part, this is a response to human ideas of nomadism and the inherent stasis of middle class *western* experience.

At the same time, theorists have even raised the question 'Why travel?', using Claude Levi Strauss's text *Triste Tropique* as the basis of their discussion. To conclude that ultimately there is an absence of meaning in everything and that it is better not to travel, and to suggest that, 'To write about travel then becomes a discussion of what it means to write - the tracing of the linguistic consecution on a page; the *movement* of meaning'[8], removes, I believe, a *fundamental* element of travel from the process - the 'felt' human experience. I would suggest that such an answer lies outside theory; travel is inherent in the human condition, based on the desire to seek, to know, to move. This is what propelled Chatwin out of the art world of Sothebys and into Patagonia, Africa, Australia, Afghanistan. It is what impelled Wilfred Thesiger to spend five years living with Marsh Arabs. There *is* something of value in the 'feltness' of human experience that transcends any theorising of language and writing. Ultimately, people will always travel and always write about travel - and whilst appropriation might be inherent in any such act, perhaps this is outweighed by the veneration that occurs at the same time, and that presumably prompted the journey in the first place. To travel is to enlarge one's understanding and vision of the world. Despite the implicit imperial and patriarchal values of Stark's travels and writings, her journeys remain impressive and inspirational. Ultimately she travelled because she wanted to, driven by an

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[8] Sunpreet Arshi, Carmen Kirstein, Riaz Naqvi and Falk Panow, *Travellers' Tales*, pp. 225 - 240.

insatiable love of history, place and people, as well as curiosity about the world, and her books brought new ideas and places into the static lives of readers in England.

Journeys will always be made, encounters will always occur. But perhaps what is changing and will change further, as evidenced in this thesis, is our culturally conditioned and ideologically controlled responses to such experiences. Perhaps as Said recommends, we will learn to respond to others and other places with a less rigid perspective of who we are and of the places from where we come. Encounters will then become reciprocal, and alterity will be viewed from a double rather than a single and fixed perspective. There will always be tourists - increases in population, money and leisure time have seen to that - but so too will there be travellers and explorers - only the explorations will be increasingly metaphorical and personal, ultimately imbued with the desire to know and understand, rather than simply discover.

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